

THE RULING PASSION.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THERE had been a revival in the leading congregations at Norwich. This religious sentiment commenced with the return of old Mr. Arnold to brotherhood with his former associates. The excitement produced by this reformation gave more active spirituality to the church, which, after a time, grew into one of those periods of absorbing devotion which pass through Christian communities from time to time, as thunder-storms break through, the atmosphere, leaving it purer from the tumult.

During the winter this intense interest was kept up in the church, and toward spring it began to consolidate into a fixed reformation. Many new members had joined the society, old ones had become earnest, and that year the foundations of new religious communities were laid which exist to this day in the city of terraces.

All this wholesome excitement had sprung, as I have hinted, from the sudden reappearance of the elder Arnold in his old place of worship. His contrition, his humility, and the sweet thankfulness that glowed on the face of his wife when she came with him to meeting, arm in arm, as in the olden times, woke up the whole congregation. I do not think Mr. Leonard even congratulated himself on the fact, or was aware of it. But he was surely the father of this revival—always, as he would have said, baring his head reverently at the thought, always under God's providence.

It was the few words in season that Leonard had uttered in the saw-mill that cold winter's day, and that prayer, so thrilling in its rude eloquence, uttered amid the thunders of the Falls, that had touched the old man's heart as with a gleam of living fire, and spreading from soul to soul with the holy magnetism of truth, turned the general thought heavenward.

Leonard claimed no credit for this—indeed, was quite unaware that any could be awarded to him; but he threw himself heart and mind into the revival, holding it above all things most important. Sometimes the saw-mill would

remain silent all the day long. If a soul was in trouble, or a sinner become thoughtful, the great log was left, half eaten through, with the motionless steel prisoned in its heart, while the master strode off among the fields, searching for that troubled conscience which the truth that burned within him might cleave effectually, as his saw cut through the forest trunks when the water rushed most abundantly from the hills.

Mrs. Leonard was a good sort of woman, a church member and all that; she took a lively interest in the revival. In a decorous, motherly way she had gone out to tea more than usual, always dropping a great many words in season over the short-cake, and giving promiscuous little exhortations to the young folks while the Young Hyson was drawing. But the good wife mingled a deal of temporal thrift with her heavenly-mindedness, and it rather annoyed her to see how many logs came to the mill and how few boards went away during the heat of this excitement. But Leonard was a resolute man in his own way, and had the happy faculty of not hearing his wife's hints about "beginning with one's own household," and other Scriptural ideas, which, being lost in a flood of words, swept by him like the waters that turned his mill. So he went on his way doing good, and taking no heed to the consequences.

Amy Leonard retired from the publicity of these anxious meetings and praying circles. From her childhood she had been a church member—her interest in sacred things was high and pure; but she shrunk away from this enthusiasm with something like affright. Once or twice she had gone with her parents to the evening prayer-meetings, but the effort seemed too much for her. She took no part in the religious proceedings, while other girls were ardent in their efforts, but sat apart, growing pale and weak, as if the enthusiasm which fired others to devotion were consuming her. Sometimes, when this enthusiasm broke into ecstacy and all the faces around glowed with delight, her great blue eyes would seem to take fright,

and search wistfully around for some means of escape from a scene that gave her nothing but pain. Sometimes those eyes would fill with tears, and turn upon her old friends pleadingly, as if some help were needed which she doubted they would withhold.

At last she gathered courage and besought her parents to leave her at home. She was not strong, and somehow night air and excitement made her worse.

This was her timid plea, and surely that white face and the shadowy circle under her eyes gave sufficient force to the appeal.

In an excitement like that which possessed the society, there was little room for keen observation. Mrs. Leonard knew that Amy was far from well; but as she seldom complained, and went steadily about her duties, her poor unhappy face escaped the scrutiny which less occupied minds might have given it.

Mrs. Leonard, it is true, found plenty of time at the sewing circles and after prayer-meeting to talk over her daughter's health, and express a great deal of anxiety regarding it. She never came home without some new recipe for drinks or powders which Amy was to try. Sometimes it would be bruised peach-pits which Mrs. So and So had informed her was infallible in almost any disease; then a drink of bruised clover leaves, or a powder of burnt alder must be tried, all of which Amy took with wan submission which would have made your heart ache.

All at once this great anxiety regarding Amy Leonard died out. The good house-mothers inquired after her, it is true, but with constrained voices, and looking another way. They grew exceedingly kind to the mother, and seemed rather disposed to urge the cooling drinks on her, as if she had become the person who most urgently required strengthening. Mrs. Leonard laughed at this attempt to discredit the roses on her buxom cheek, and wondered what it was that made the sisters pray for her so often and so earnestly, as if she were not in full communion and grace. It rather annoyed her to be held up as an object of special solicitude.

Leonard, too, might have seen a change in his brethren's looks of earnest sympathy—a studied deference to his opinions and wishes that might have struck him as remarkable at another time; but now he was busy calling sinners to the altar of God, and only thought of these things long enough to be grateful for them without investigating their sources.

In Mr. Arnold's family a great change had

also taken place, from a dilatory, careless man, confused by drink and shrinking from notice, he had taken up his farming duties with energy. The colored men, who had loitered half their time around the kitchen, were now put into hard work, repairing fences, planting fields, and laying stone walls on the farm, till a few months gave the neglected place an aspect of thrift and comfort that it had not known for years.

But, strange enough, with this prosperity came a thirst for money, and habits of penurious saving, that curtailed the comforts of the household beyond anything known in the family before. Arnold seemed to count every grain of rye or ear of corn consumed in-doors as an extravagance to be condemned. His cattle were all sold off except those necessary to working the place—every superfluity disappeared, and yet no money seemed to replace the property that disappeared.

When the young Frenchman came up from New Haven—as he did once or twice during the season—this strict economy was a little relaxed, but, the moment he was gone, everything beyond bare necessities disappeared again. Mrs. Arnold wondered at this change, but she did not complain—anything was better than the thriftless waste of former years. She was too thankful for the blessed return of her husband to care how he managed the property, which, after all, belonged to him.

One day, about this time, Mr. Arnold sought Dr. Blake in his office, which consisted of a little one-story wing attached to a dwelling house of some considerable pretension in the edge of the town. Dr. Blake was a man of means, and for this reason his old neighbor came.

The doctor had just returned from his circuit, which kept him two-thirds of the time on horse-back. His horse, with the marks of a saddle on his back, was cropping the white clover in front of the house, and his saddle-bags, worn smooth as glass, stood behind the door, strapped for use. The good man was seated in a capacious splint-bottomed chair, which, with his homespun clothes, gave a rustic look to his appearance. He was busy writing down an account of his visits when Arnold came in.

On the first symptoms of Arnold's reformation, Dr. Blake had been one of the first to extend the right hand of fellowship to the struggling man; and now his fine face expanded with a glow of welcome as his old neighbor came in. He flung down the pen, and arose, offering the great splint chair to his guest.

"I'm glad to see you—rale glad at all times. You know that, neighbor, without telling. Come sit down, and make yourself at home."

No. Mr. Arnold would not take the doctor's chair. Another would answer just as well for him. He had come to talk over a little business.

"Business! Oh! well, of course; but just now I would like to talk of something else. It's on my mind, Arnold, and I must get it off or it'll choke me—your son, Arnold, I want to have a plain talk about that young scam—fellow."

Arnold became nervous in an instant, and put up both hands, as if to ward off a blow.

"Not about him, at any rate. Not yet, doctor. Wait till you hear what I came for. Give me time and I will talk about Benedict. Just now there is no subject on earth that I dread so much."

"Well, well, I don't want to bother you. After all, talking often does more good than harm—but your son, Arnold—your son——"

"Don't! don't!" said Arnold, lifting both hands again. "I'm doing my best, pinching and saving every way. The women folks complain about it, and I don't blame 'em; but it must be done. That it is which brought me here."

"What is it? You talk at random, neighbor. You can't help the young—well, well, the young man—by pinching and saving at home. It is a case beyond that."

"I know. saving by little and little might drag through one's whole life, and then leave the whole thing undone. You have plenty of money out at interest—can't you draw some in? I want to mortgage the farm."

"Mortgage your farm, Arnold!"

"Yes; just come and ride over it, see the crops, fences, and barns. We've worked hard this spring and repaired everything; besides, I've sold off a good deal of stock."

"And you really want to hire money on the farm?"

"I can't get along without it, doctor."

"But you have no debts—nothing to speak of, or I should have heard about it?"

"No, not a debt. I paid all those things off at once. They didn't amount to much; my wife always took care of that."

"And now you want money—how much?"

Arnold mentioned the sum. The doctor looked astonished.

"Why, man alive, that'll almost cover the whole value of your place."

"I know it. I know it; but every year we'll make the farm worth more and more."

The doctor looked at his earnest face. How it had changed! There was force and intellect in it now—something that commanded respect in the serious purpose that evidently possessed him.

"One question before I say yes or no about this money," said the doctor, leaning back in his chair: "Are you borrowing it for any speculation of your son's? If that is the case I won't let you have a farthing."

Arnold turned white as this question came bluntly forth, and he answered slowly, thinking over each word with conscientious truthfulness.

"No, it's not a speculation. I want to pay the money. It'll never come back again. I must pay off the mortgage by degrees."

"Ah! neighbor, you'll find that hard work."

"I know it; but it might have been done before this if I hadn't given up like a coward. If God spares my life it shall be paid up, every shilling of it. Don't be afraid, doctor; the farm is a good one, and my wife and I, with the hands, can live on a little. I've cyphered it all out, over and over again."

"But tell me what you want of this large sum of money, Arnold?"

"I cannot. It is a duty—something that I must pay, or go to the grave bowed down with a burden that no one can take up for me."

The old man's voice was sad; the perspiration started to his forehead, in drops. He wiped it off with his handkerchief of home-made check, and tried to smile.

"You'll let me have the money, doctor? It'll make a new man of me."

"Yes, Arnold, I'll let you have it; but, remember, I don't want your farm. If it falls into my hands at last, I shall always condemn myself for this day's work."

"When—when can I have it?" inquired Arnold, eagerly.

"Why? Is there so much haste?"

"Oh! yes, I shall not be a man till it is done."

"Well, I will call in the money at once."

"Within a week?"

"Perhaps."

"Surely—I trust surely. The time will seem long any way."

"Well, well, I'll not be over—a week."

"Thank you. I don't know how to thank you in the right way, doctor."

"Well, never mind. Come take a glass of cider brandy."

"I, doctor!"

"Oh! brother, I forgot. Well, then, a cup of tea; the old woman'll have one ready about this time; I've got something to talk over with you."

Arnold shrunk within himself.

"Not to-night. I don't think I could bear anything more just at present—some other time."

"Well, well, remember me to the women folks. I tell you what, Arnold, that wife of yours is an angel."

"She's all the world to me, doctor. No one can guess what she has done for her husband; and the girl is her mother over again."

As he spoke, Arnold took up his hat and prepared to go out. The doctor seemed ready to speak again, but some kind feeling checked him, and, with a cordial grip of the hand, he saw the heavily burdened man depart.

When quite alone, he sat some time with his arms folded on the desk before him, pondering over the conversation which had just passed; he was anxious and tired, but his heart went out in compassionate sympathy, not only for the man who had left him, but for one to whom he must carry still more bitter sorrow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A RELIGIOUS excitement, wherever it arises, is sure to awake a thousand virtues into action, which, in ordinary times, sleep supinely in human nature. Besides the prayer-meetings, anxious circles, and lectures, spinning bees and quiltings presented themselves to the congregation. "The servant is worthy of his hire," was the generous opinion; and the minister, who averaged two or three lectures or sermons a day, must not be forgotten in his worldly stores. So blocks of patchwork were distributed throughout each household connected with the society, of which a sumptuous quilt was set in progress for the minister, and no housewife set her flax or wheel aside that season without adding a few knots of yarn for the spinning bee which was to come off in behalf of that good man.

If Leonard was most active in spiritual matters, his bustling wife took up those temporal results of the revival with no inferior amount of energy. In fact she was the heart and soul of these undertakings. Early and late the hum of her wheel might be heard setting up a small opposition to the rush of the Falls, and her steel side-thimble grew brighter and brighter with constantly forcing the glittering needle through

gorgeous bits of calico, which were industriously cut into diamonds, squares, or stars, and as industriously stitched together again.

Amy Leonard did her share of the work—more than her share, poor thing! considering how pale and ill she looked; but sometimes when her mother's back was turned, the tears would swell into her eyes and blind them, till the flyers flashed before her in broken glows, or her needle disappeared in the mist.

All the time she never spoke of Arnold; and her mother, with unusual reticence, avoided the young man's name. His visits to the cabin had taken place during her absence to evening meetings, and she looked upon the attachment which had evidently once existed between him and her daughter, as a feeling that had died out on the young man's part, and which a little time would set right with Amy. The whole subject was a matter of self-reproach to the good woman, for she had encouraged the intimacy between the young people with all her match-making skill, partly because the Arnolds were of a respectable old family, still rich enough to hold their heads high, and partly because her kind womanly instincts told her how deeply the best feelings of her child were involved in the question.

But with all Mrs. Leonard's worldly foresight, she was of the old puritan stock, and had neither charity nor countenance for sin in any form that it could present itself. Nay, even the suspicion of sin, vaguely as it came, was enough to turn her heart against the young man entirely.

Joshua Leonard had told his wife of the warning which the elder Arnold had given with regard to his son. The anguish with which this warning had been uttered struck conviction to Leonard's soul. He knew how hard it must be for a kind parent to condemn his own child; and, incoherent as the words had been, they left a fearful impression of truth.

Leonard was a strong, powerful man, but he shrunk from anything that threatened to give pain to his daughter, and, with that delicacy which makes great strength beautiful, spoke of Arnold's warning only to his wife. She, self-sufficient in all domestic affairs, placed herself on the watch, and, instead of retreating as of old when the young man came to spend the evening at her cabin, kept her place at the fire-side, diminishing in nothing her usual hospitality, but watching vigilantly every word or glance which passed between the young people.

Then came the revival which swept all home thoughts from her mind—young Arnold seemed

to have dropped out of her life. She heard with satisfaction his name connected with the French girl, and, rejoicing that her season of vigilance was at an end, allowed herself to be swept off in the absorbing turmoil of a revival.

All that time Benedict Arnold spent his evenings at the hearth-stone which the father and mother had deserted.

At last he went away, and, to escape the mournful loneliness that fell upon her, Amy sometimes went to evening meetings with her parents. Leonard and his wife both noticed that she was generally excited and flushed before she started to these gatherings, but came back oppressed with a heavy sadness that nothing could mitigate or explain. They did not notice that, for a little time, she invariably disappeared from the meetings for a few minutes, and, hurrying with breathless haste to the post-office, would ask with shrinking eyes, and a voice that could scarcely be heard, if there was no letter yet?

The answer was always a half-rebuking, half-compassionate shake of the head, at which she would creep away and glide back into the congregation like a ghost; but when once upon her knees, the sobs that broke through the hands clasped over her face were enough to melt a heart of ice.

Then week after week went by, and Amy would go to meeting no more. The noise confused her, she said it was far better to stay at home and get yarn for the minister's spinning bee, it would save her mother from so much extra work. Mrs. Leonard repeated this at the sewing circles, when the blocks of patch-work were brought in and sewed together in general conclave. At first these reasons were received with expressions of sympathy for sweet Amy Leonard's ill-health; but, after a time, covert glances were cast from eye to eye, and Mrs. Leonard's maternal egotism was received in grave silence.

This was the state of things, as I have before hinted, when the spring time broke upon beautiful Norwich. The spinning season was well nigh over, and the result of all those wheels that had been hissing and humming in nearly every dwelling within five miles of Norwich, was to exhibit itself in a grand quilting and spinning bee, which the minister was notified would take place at his own dwelling, on one of the loveliest June days that ever gladdened a human heart. The women's share of the entertainment was complete, with the exception of an extra baking in every household, which was to save the minister's wife from all de-

mands of hospitality for the self-invited guests. They had nothing more to accomplish. They would assemble in the afternoon to finish the quilt, which a committee of four was appointed to fit into the frames, and mark out in a border of double herring-bone and a centre of shell-work.

Another committee would take charge of the table set out in the long, back kitchen which opened into an apple orchard; and a third was to receive the hanks of linen, tow, and woolen yarn, for which pegs were provided all around the best chamber up stairs. These were all feminine arrangements, and sure to be well done, as the minister knew of old. But the brethren of the church were not to be entirely excluded. Their contributions, it is true, came in less ostentatiously, but in a form quite as substantial. Many a bag of potatoes had found its way to the minister's cellar, during the winter; to say nothing of firkins of shad salted down on the banks of the river where they were caught; and sacks of grain, enough to keep the ministerial family in bread stuff till the harvest came on.

For these benevolent and scattering donations, the brethren were permitted to join in the yarn festival, after the quilt was taken off, when there was to be a grand tea drinking, to wind up with extemporaneous singing and a short season of prayer.

Of course there was great excitement all over Norwich, for a festival equal to this, either in numbers or amount of contributions, had never been heard of in the good town before. More than thirty new converts had been added to the congregation, and their contributions seemed a tangible proof of stability in the holy service of the Lord. Over these new converts there was nothing but thanksgiving and praise, which gave the idea of a religious jubilee to the whole occasion.

But from all this rejoicing the two families in which we are mostly deeply interested seemed strangely excluded. The Leonards had been invited, it is true; but it was somewhat remarkable that Amy's name was left out in the invitation; and Mrs. Leonard, instead of being appointed to some prominent place in the arrangement, had hardly been consulted. She was a guest at liberty to bring in her mite, of course, but that was not the position which she had a right to expect. The good woman was a good deal astonished, and seriously wounded at this slight. She, who had been a pillar in the church so long—who had worked night and day that the value of her contribution should be

second to none, to be put aside without right or reason she could not understand it.

Leonard was so much accustomed to his wife's bustle and chatter, when an occasion of this kind came off, that he scarcely heeded her complaints, and contented himself by advising her to do her duty, and not trouble herself about the way it was done, or how others performed theirs.

With this wholesome admonition, he cast the subject from his mind; but with Amy the case was far different, she was constantly searching her mother's face with those large eyes, as if there was something in this slight from which she shrank tremblingly away. Sometimes, when her mother would break into the subject suddenly, the poor girl would start and almost cry out with a pain that struck her to the heart.

Still Mrs. Leonard was too much a woman of spirit to retreat or flag in her purpose. She wasn't to be driven from her duty—not she. If the sisters did not want her help or advice, very well, they could do without it. Of one thing she was certain, the quilting would be a botch if she wasn't there to mark and roll up; as for the yarn, why that which Amy had spun would be like cobwebs to a cable compared to anything they would have: really it seemed as if the girl was spinning it out of her own sighs, for every thread was drawn with a deep breath. When that yarn was brought in, the sisters would blush at their ingratitude, if any blush was left in 'em. Then, as for cake, she would like to see a woman of them all who could round off a pound-cake like her; and, as for doughnuts, oh! nonsense, they couldn't, one of 'em, catch up with her there in a week of Sundays! Well, as Joshua said, she would do her duty and not care about others. It was hard, but she hadn't been a church member so long without knowing how to forgive.

"Mother," said Amy, with a quiver in her voice, "perhaps it's me."

"You! What can this mean, Amy? You! why no little bird in its nest was ever so harmless as you have been, sitting here lonesome as a whip-poor-will, while your father and I have done nothing but exhort, and pray, and run after converts, and this is what we get for it; but the Lord knows which is right."

Amy went close up to her mother, every fibre of her body quivered, and a look of death was on her face. She reached out her hand and attempted to lay it on her mother's shoulder, but Mrs. Leonard brushed it off as if a rose-leaf annoyed her.

"There—there, don't talk. I know my duty as a Christian, and won't be preached to by my

own child. Just go into the next room and see if the sponge is rising nicely, I wouldn't have them doughnuts beat to-morrow for anything, that would be a cross I couldn't take up."

Amy turned away with a gasping breath. When her mother went into the next room, impatient to see how her cake was rising, she found Amy sitting on the floor by the wooden bread bowl, with both hands clasped in her lap, gazing hard at the opposite window.

"Why, Amy, you are getting too shiftless. Why on earth couldn't you lift that cloth and tell me how the dough is working? I used them new turnpike cuppins that nobody else has got, and the cakes ought to yeast over the bowl by this time."

But Amy sat motionless gazing at the window, her mother's voice sent a shiver over her, but it failed to unlock the iron that held her faculties.

"Amy, why don't you speak?"

"Mother, I can't. I have been trying, but the words choke me."

She spoke in a dreamy way, shaking her head to and fro—to and fro, as if the sound of her own words was a pain which she could not shake off.

Mrs. Leonard took Amy by the arm and lifted her to her feet.

"Are you crazy, Amy Leonard?" she said, half-angrily, for the slight she had received had roused the good woman's temper more than she liked to acknowledge.

"No, mother!"

"Then what is the matter?"

"Nothing!"

"I don't believe it. You are either a bad tempered, provoking girl, determined to torment your poor mother's life out, or you're down sick and ought to have a doctor right off."

"No—no, I'm well," almost shrieked Amy, "well and strong. See, I can lift this big bowl like nothing."

She stooped down and lifted the bread bowl as if it had been a handful of feathers, and, carrying it into the next room, set it on the table and lifted the cloth of snowy linen.

"Look, mother, look," she cried, with a hysterical laugh, "the turnpike cuppins are working famously: see, the dough is all honeycombed and swelling up like foam. It's time to get your pan of lard over the fire; where is the flour dredge and rolling pin? I'll cut the cakes out while you fry them."

Mrs. Leonard looked at her daughter a moment, in blank astonishment, and then broke into an uneasy laugh.

"Dear me, Amy, you are a strange girl. I never saw your like: one minute moaning in the cellar, the next singing in the garret; but no wonder you laugh, that dough beats all I ever did see; so bustle about and roll the cakes into shape, while I get the big fork, and pan. I've saved some lard a purpose, sweet as a nut and white as snow. That's right, tie on your checked apron, and roll up your sleeves. Why, Amy, how thin your arms are getting! Dear me—there, lay down the rolling-pin. I can handle it best. You can round the cakes after I cut them out—that's work for a baby. There, how you are beginning to tremble again! Never mind, I don't want any help to fry a batch of doughnuts—well, if you must do something, just beat up the white of half a dozen eggs, and make some frosting for the pound-cake. I want it to look like snow-crust, and taste like honey. They shan't beat us, Amy, in anything. I'll show 'em."

Amy took the work allotted to her, and directly the contents of her bowl was creaming over with pearly foam, beaten up by a hand that trembled like an aspen leaf, while her mother wielded her rolling-pin, and shook her dredging-box fiercely, as she remembered the slight that had been put upon her.

The melted lard had simmered itself into silence, only hissing out a spiteful protest as the limp bits of dough fell into it, swelling and browning into cakes that were to excite the envy of all Norwich. Still the good woman had continued her indignant complaints against the neighbors that could treat her so; but, as the fire grew hot, and the brown nuts rose to a mountain in the bright tin milk-pan placed on the hearth for their reception, a certainty of triumphant success mollified her, and a strain of Christian charity pattered through the torrent of her resentment, as we sometimes see the brightest rain-drops dimpling the turbid surface of a pool.

"After all, Amy, I'll set them an example—see if I don't—one that they'll never forget so long as the meeting-house stands. I'll make two big pound-cakes, instead of one. The best cheese in the milk-house shall go, if we have to scrimp ourselves a month: as for dried beef and them doughnuts, I won't stop to weigh or count. When I do heap coals of fire on the sisters' heads they shall be lively, now I tell you. To-night your father shall get a load of white pine tops, hemlock, and princes pine, to dress the supper-room with. Nobody else'll think of that, I reckon. Then you shall go over to the swamp and get an armful of wild roses. The hemlock

buds is sprouting out lovely, and—yes, I've a'most a mind to send that string of robins' eggs over the looking-glass—that would touch their feelings, for they all know how I prized them eggs. Then, after I've shown them what a true Christian spirit is, I'll say, 'Sisters, what is the reason you put this slight on me and my daughter? To say nothing of myself, that ain't of much account, perhaps, she's the salt of the earth, as good and pious as the oldest church member amongst you; never told even a fib in her life, or kept the least thing from her mother. She's'—dear me, Amy! what is the matter? You'll let that bowl slide off your lap! Goodness! what a face! Why, child, are you dying?"

"No, mother, no—I'm—the heat—that fire—oh! mother, mother!"

The cry that broke through these gasping words was startling.

Mrs. Leonard threw the door open with sudden affright, and, gathering up the corners of her apron, tightened the edge, and commenced fanning that pale face with all her might.

"Are you better? Does it do any good? Wait a minute till I get the turkey's wing."

"No, mother, don't—don't! I want to go out, just a minute."

"Well, go. The air will bring you to. Dear me! I wish your father would stay about more; these fainting fits scare me a'most to death."

Amy tried to reassure her mother by a smile, but the attempt was more painful to look upon than tears would have been. Mrs. Leonard took a sun-bonnet from its nail in the next room, and tied it over the poor quivering face, with tears in her own sunny eyes.

"Go down by the Falls, Amy, the air will be cool there. Don't mind helping me; I shall get through nicely. This fire is awful hot, but law I don't mind it no more than nothing."

The kind woman would have kissed the face which the bonnet protected; but Amy turned away her head, as if dismayed by those plump lips; but when she saw the color rush to her mother's temples she put up her pale mouth and met the caress; but the touch was like marble.

She went to the Falls—that pale, broken-hearted girl—and sat down on the shelf of rock which had been consecrated by her father's prayer months ago. There she fell into a state of apathy—that dead stillness of the mind which comes when no source for action presents itself. Her eyes were fixed on the waters; the dizzy whirl of their foam made her brain reel. She

shrank back into the shade of a great hemlock branch that stretched over her like a banner; and, covering her eyes with both hands, rocked to and fro in desolate silence, while the leaves whispered over her, and the sunshine strove to penetrate the thick leaves and look on her sorrow in vain.

Another house in Norwich was the scene of trouble that day. The Arnold mansion, so full of life and bustle when we first saw it, was greatly changed since the master had forsaken his old negligent ways. Notwithstanding those unworthy habits, he had kept from impairing his property to any great extent; and there was always enough and to spare for his family and the guests that came beneath his roof. But now this plenty had, by degrees, demolished, till strict parsimony reigned on the farm, a state of things which neither Mrs. Arnold nor Hannah could understand. As for Hagar, the rebellion of her spirit broke out furiously; and she never set a dish upon the table, or kneaded a scant baking of bread, without muttering her discontent.

Mrs. Arnold, singular to say, had, like her neighbor at the Falls, been quite overlooked when the committees were formed to carry out the minister's spinning bee. Why was this? the gentle woman questioned in her mind. Why should she meet with neglect now, when her husband had returned to his Christian duties, which had never been visited on her during his moral debasement? Had she committed some fault that the sisters passed her by so unkindly? or, was she getting old, and did this seeming slight spring from a wish to spare her the anxiety and fatigue of active co-operation?

The gentle woman asked these questions over and over to herself, and at last mentioned them to Hannah, who, in her sweet way, gave the most pleasant construction to what seemed, even to her unsuspecting nature, strange, to say the least.

"It is because you haven't been very well lately, mother," said the young girl, striving to believe her own words. "You know there was a general invitation given out to all the members."

"Yes, but was that ever done before when any responsibility was to be taken, Hannah? I must have offended some of the sisters, or perhaps the minister himself."

"Offended them! You, dear mother! That is impossible."

"I don't know. Sometimes I think no one ever was so careless about other people's feelings as I am. Only yesterday I forgot to have

biscuit baked for Hagar and the men folks, and they're always used to it."

"But, mother, we had none on the table for ourselves. How could you?"

"Well, Hannah, that's true; but the hands work so hard; of course we can get along without nice things better than they. I really think Hagar felt the want of it."

"No, marm. Hagar didn't feel the want of them 'ere biskit, nor nothin' else, let me tell you!" cried the sable handmaiden, pushing open the door which stood ajar. "She jest wants ter keep up the 'spectability ob de family, and dat's all 'bout it. Bran bread's good nuff for her and dem 'ere he colored pussons as belong ter de house. She'd jest like to catch one on 'em complainin'; but there isn't no reason, as she can see on, why things can't be as they used ter was, when an oven full of bread, and biskit, and ginger-cake, ter say nothing of baked beans and Injin pudding, was put in three times a week. The family isn't no smaller, as she ever heard; and as for the farm, it's jist bringing in as much agin as it ever did, only every arthly thing is sold off afore it has a chance to git ripe. Miss Arnold, if you'll jist give any 'spectable reason for these carryings on I'll guv up; but, till den, don't nethir ob you 'spect ter see a smilin' countenance 'bout de kitchen; for there's one pusson in them premises that can't stand it, and won't."

Poor Mrs. Arnold was quite taken aback by this harangue. Hagar had expressed her discontent in muttered words and black looks often enough, but never before had she given it the force of her peculiar eloquence. The worst of it was, the gentle woman, had she wished it, could have given no good reason for her husband's parsimony, and to lay any blame on him was beyond her nature. It was all very strange, but surely the head of a house had a right to dispose of his own property unquestioned.

As these thoughts ran through her mind, the mistress stood embarrassed and blushing before her handmaiden. At last she said, with gentle decision,

"It is Mr. Arnold's will that we should live more saving, Hagar, that is enough for me."

"Humph!" ejaculated Hagar, sniffing the air till her broad nostrils vibrated with the disdain that swelled them. "If ever this 'ere pusson should condescend ter unite herself wid a man ob de opposite sect, she'd jist like ter see him scrimpin' and savin' 'bout her cookin'. Meachin business, mighty meachin business, Miss Arnold!"

Hannah Arnold laughed a little in spite of her annoyance.

"Well, Hagar," she said, quite cheerfully, "of course father knows best; with a cook like you a little is quite sufficient; he trusts more to your skill than ever, that's all."

Hagar bridled, and the inflation of her nostrils subsided with a gradual collapse.

"Now I know jest what yer a thinking 'bout, Hannah. It's them eggs as I beat up with greens, and fried in a thick cake for that French bean of yours. He thought I couldn't do it, but catch dis chile not understanding anything she's ever seen done; that larnsome gal wid de feathers, cum inter de kitchen to cook an—an—an—omnibus."

"Omelet," suggested Hannah, all in a glow of roses.

"Yes, an onionete for our Ben. I kept a sharp look out, and 'membered eberyting dat she put in, greens and all—dat's how it was 'complished. Lord a massy, didn't he 'joy dat breakfast all 'lone wid you in de out-room?"

Out came the roses over Hannah's face all in full bloom again. Mrs. Arnold, too, felt the shadow of a blush pass over her cheek, from sympathy with the sweet confusion into which her child was thrown.

"Hagar," she said, smiling softly, "I'm afraid there's something on fire in the kitchen; hadn't you better go see?"

"More likely there's someting afire here," said Hagar, casting a sidelong glance at Hannah's burning face; "but I didn't mean ter decorapose nobody, 'cause them as has been through de mill know how de stones grind; if der is anyting unpleasant for a 'septible pussion, it is ter feel yerself a blushing when yer can't help it. I know ov a gemman as says, he wouldn't make de fair sex blush for nothing; when a pussion I could mention, but won't, was a feelin' as if a fire was blazing out in her cheeks all de time."

"But I'm sure there's something going wrong in the kitchen, Hagar," said Hannah, laughing in spite of herself.

"No doubt, Miss—no doubt; but I've got something more 'portant to 'tend to jest now. What 'bout de cooking for dis minister's bee? Not a word's been said or done 'bout dat yet."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Arnold, with embarrassment; "perhaps we shan't go."

"Shan't go, Miss Arnold! Am dis family going to 'struction, or am it not, dat's what I want ter find out afore I step out ob dese tracks?"

"Well, Hagar, I can't tell just yet. Mr. Ar-

nold will be home soon, and I'll speak to him about it. Perhaps we shall go after all. The sisters might think us offended, Hannah. Oh! there he comes. Run into the kitchen, Hagar, I will come to you in a little while, and then, perhaps, we shall be busy enough."

Hagar would probably have kept her ground, but she was deserted on the instant, as Mrs. Arnold and Hannah went to the front door, waiting there for Mr. Arnold to dismount and come in.

A stranger was with Arnold, or rather a person who came unexpectedly. It was Dr. Blake mounted on his chestnut horse, but without the professional saddle-bags.

The two men dismounted and came in together, talking earnestly as they approached the door.

"Think of it well, my friend," the doctor was saying, as he came up the yard. "It is an easy thing to saddle a farm with things of this kind; but not one man in ten ever gets his property clear again."

"I know," said Arnold, firmly; "but there is no choice. *I must have the money!*"

Mrs. Arnold heard this, and for a moment her heart beat fast; but she looked in her husband's face and grew calm again, there was something firm, almost grand in the expression, that gave her confidence. He had not looked so noble since the days of his youth.

"But stop a moment, your wife may not like it, I can do nothing against her consent," said the doctor, who had not yet seen Mrs. Arnold and Hannah.

"There she is. Ask her if she can trust her husband now."

Mrs. Arnold stepped forward, smiling.

"What is it you want, husband?"

"He wants you to sign a mortgage on this piece," said the doctor, bluntly, "one that he must work like a slave to pay off; and which will leave you a poor widow if he does not, for it would ruin me to lose so much money."

"Is it necessary?" questioned the wife, looking into her husband's face with her tender eyes. "Is it best, husband?"

"It is right, my poor wife. I can never breathe freely till it is done."

"Come in," she said, still smiling, "there is a pen and ink in the out-room; come, doctor, tell me where to put my name. Hannah, do you know what we are doing?"

"Yes, mother!"

"Well, come look on. It may leave us poor, daughter, but your father says it is right. Shall I sign here, Dr. Blake?"

.....
The doctor placed his finger on the spot she was to sign, and she placed her name more boldly than it had ever been written before.

“No,” said the doctor, taking up the mortgage, “nothing can make you a poor man, Arnold, while these two women live. Nothing!”

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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A RADICAL CURE.

BY CATHARINE F. WILLIAMS.

CHAPTER I.

"AND so you set out on your journey into the wilderness to-morrow?" said Rufus Walcott to his sister.

"Yes, if you choose to dignify it by that name," returned Henrietta. "I am only going about two hundred miles in the interior of the state."

"Far enough for all effects of barbarism! Two hundred miles from the academy, the avenue, and the club! It might as well be two thousand. How will you manage to exist?"

"Excellently well," she answered, laughing. "In place of the academy I shall have the music of a whole orchestra of orioles, robins, and bob-o-links; I don't doubt I shall find their notes quite equal to Lagrange. For the avenue, every brick and brown stone of which I know by heart, I shall have the grassy country roads, and nature with some fresh beauty in her aspect every day. As for the club, never having experienced its delights, I shall not feel their absence."

"But you leave your own circle entirely; what congenial society can a girl like you possibly find in that remote country village?"

"Enough, and to spare, my good sir, as you would admit if you had been there."

"Which heaven forefend! You can hardly tell, Henrietta, how surprised I was on coming home to find you so intimate with this Miss Barton. It is inexplicable. For, without flattery, you are unusually well-bred and accomplished, and I *did* suppose that in the choice of a friend you would seek something a little higher and more refined."

"My good brother, what do you know against Miss Barton?"

"Know? Why nothing, by actual acquaintance. But I have an intuition of what she is; a short, dumpy little personage, with a passion for gay plaids; wears a bow to fasten her collar, and a horn comb to put up her hair."

"Did you ever see her?" asked Henrietta, looking much amused. "She is somewhat dumpy, to be sure, but people generally call her extremely pretty."

"I dare say she may be, in the milk-maid style of red cheeks, curl of hair, et cetera. A kind of prettiness I detest! without fashion,

refinement, or grace. Then, of course, she says, 'dooz,' and 'Miss'—plays the Jenny Lind polka and sings negro melodies."

"Admirable! How did you ever become so familiar with the characteristics of country girls? One would fancy that instead of spending the last year in Paris, you had cultivated a farm in the interior!"

"Oh! it was during that period of my youth, spent under the care of the Rev. Doubleday. He was not a severe master, and we had ample opportunity to become acquainted with the rustic belles. I used to be in love with one, if you'll believe me!"

"It is certainly difficult to credit. But, Rufus, you had, perhaps, better reserve the remainder of your intuitions concerning my friend Fanny till you have seen her, for I intend to bring her home with me if possible."

"I shall be absent if you do."

"No, you must remain, if for no other purpose than to see how well your portrait corresponds with the original." And she left the room to dress for dinner.

The little conversation above recorded, took place one bright October afternoon, in the back parlor of a handsome house in Eighth street. Mr. Rufus Walcott, the male interlocutor in question, had been endowed by nature with a fine person, and an unusual aptitude in acquiring the arts that embellished it. A three years' tour of Europe brought these gifts to perfection, and Mr. Walcott returned home to become the delight of one sex, and the despair of the other. Even the great Brown, who had watched his progress from boyhood upward with a solicitude almost paternal, admitted that in his case there was little more to be done. He did not affect brilliancy, either of costume or manner; his style was quiet, but it was a quiet that announced the master. For the rest he was not without sense and talent; but these qualities were just now a good deal obscured by vanity. He felt himself so irreproachably the mode; so incontestably the topmost bubble on the bright wave of fashionable life, that it was difficult to believe himself made of the same clay with less favored mortals; harder still to think that any person, or anything out of the magic circle,

could be worthy of a thought. Henrietta was quite different; she had sufficient beauty and fortune to have achieved the proud rank of a Flora McFlimsey, had she so aspired; but she had other objects of ambition. She dressed handsomely, as a matter of course, and gave, as all girls will, time and attention to her toilet, but there were many hours of every day, during which, incredible though it may seem, her mind was not in the least occupied with what she had worn, or was going to wear, with conquests won, or triumphs anticipated. At such times she thought of her mother, her brother, her friends; music she had heard, books she had read, scenery she had viewed; and not unfrequently of the blessings she enjoyed, the gratitude she should feel for them, and the duties they laid upon her. A strange character, was she not?

CHAPTER II.

A DAY or two after the one on which our story opens, Henrietta arrived at B—, and was welcomed by her friend. Of course, after a separation of six months they had everything to say to each other, and among the topics discussed was Henrietta's brother. During the years that Miss Barton's education, mental, moral, and physical, had been receiving its finishing touches at the Spingler, Mr. Rufus was absent in Europe, and the young lady, who had often heard him spoken of in the family circle, experienced a feminine curiosity concerning his appearance, mind, and manners. Henrietta was eager to tell, and she to hear, and in consequence she was presently *au fait* of his various accomplishments; what a good shot he was, and what a capital horseman; how well he played the guitar, and chess, and billiards; what a rich tenor voice he had, and what little boots he wore. How he could speak French, and German, and Italian, and had the handsomest moustache in all the city. And he was so kind-hearted and attentive a brother. We give the list of his charms at random; Miss Walcott detailed them with more attention to order. "He has but one fault," she said, "and of that, Fanny, I want you to cure him. He thinks there is nothing in the world worth living for but society, fashion, and display—and that every one who has not had the good or ill-fortune to be born into the routine he adores—a country house, town house, and all that—is entirely out of his world. How you would have laughed to hear his idea of you! It won't vex you, because he never saw you in his life"—and

she repeated the description we have already heard.

Fanny laughed. "Really, I am flattered!" she exclaimed.

"Now, my dear," continued Henrietta, "I have a fine plan in my head. I want you to give him a lesson he will remember. You have promised to go home with me, you know; Rufus expects you. This is what you must do; act the part of the country girl he imagines you to be, dress a little out of fashion, be ignorant of all forms of etiquette, astonished at the wonders of the city. Only remain your own charming, lady-like little self through it all, and, my word for it, this dear, fastidious brother of mine will surrender in a week, and be ready to lay hand, heart, and fortune at your feet."

"Nonsense!" said Fanny, "what an impracticable plan! I conquer such an Admirable Crichton by the sheer force of my charms! It is like sending out David with his sling and pebbles against the great Goliath!"

"And will have as happy an issue. Come, dear, promise me—else I shall think you are too vain to like to have your beauty obscured for even a short space." But Fanny hesitated; she thought it was foolish; she doubted whether it were exactly proper.

"What can be more proper than to teach a vain young man that sense and goodness are powers in themselves, and entirely independent of the mere fripperies of fashion? Why, you dear child, it's your privilege, your mission to do it. Don't deliberate any longer—there's a darling!" And Fanny finally gave the desired assent.

The two weeks of Miss Walcott's stay passed very pleasantly in visits, rides, and drives, but with these we have naught to do. The friends held a good deal of consultation together as to the wardrobe most proper for the rustic heroine; they finally decided on a black silk dress with flounces, a dark silk, a Mazarine blue merino, and a very brilliant plaid ditto, red and green. The black silk was already in Miss Barton's possession—not very fresh, but not exactly shabby—the dark silk was quite new, as was the blue merino, trimmed with black velvet on the waist and sleeves. The plaid was bought for the occasion, but there was no difficulty in finding it among the goods of the village merchant. The traditional white muslin was not forgotten, and, a few articles of outside apparel being added, the preparations were pronounced complete. Henrietta and Fanny packed the trunk with great glee. "Now recollect your programme," said the former. "The plaid

merino is your traveling dress, and you will wear it in the morning likewise; the blue merino and the black silk are your variety for afternoon, and the other one is for state occasions. Where are your bows, Fanny? Oh! here, in this box—and the little gold stone, and mosaic pin—don't forget that on any account—it harmonizes so completely. Now I believe the fair rustic's baggage is ready; but you must carry a few things to wear after the *déroulement*: how shall we manage? Oh! I have it; I'll take my music out of the trunk and pack it in a box, and you can put in two or three dresses, and a handbox with a bonnet or so. What a pretty thing this lemon-colored silk is! I never saw handsomer lace than the *berthe*."

"Uncle George gave it to me when we were in Washington last winter; I have only worn it once."

"It looks perfectly fresh. Then here is a tarlatane with baby waist and pinked flounces; and this rose-colored silk which looks so sweetly with your pearls. I think these will do. Now, Fanny, put on your plaid merino; I long to see you in it."

Fanny obeyed; the high colors were not, after all, unbecoming to her bright brunette complexion, and Miss Walcott surveyed her from head to foot with a conviction that she would "do." Fanny was so plump and dimpled, her brown eyes sparkled so gayly, her hair shone with such a silken gloss, that even the severe Rufus might, at that moment, have pardoned her "dumpiness." She was very pretty, no doubt, though in her native village her brown complexion went against her, and it was generally thought that she "*would* be good-looking if she wasn't so black." She was intelligent and fond of reading, but different from heroines in general in not being very highly accomplished. She could do a great many things pretty well, but no one thing in perfection, unless it might be plain sewing. She played a little, sang a little, drew a little, but was not likely to "witch the world" in any of these departments. However she was a good daughter, a good sister, and an industrious, sweet-tempered girl; qualities which may, perhaps, in the long run contribute as much to domestic happiness as the best executed variations, or the most finished landscapes.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT sentiment could be more profound than the disgust with which the fastidious Rufus surveyed Miss Barton, for the first time, at his

mother's well-spread breakfast table? Fanny wore the plaid merino, according to agreement, with a bright bow at her throat, close against a well-starched linen collar; nor could smiling lips or sparkling eyes atone to Mr. Walcott for sins of such a dye. At dinner his horror reached a climax. Miss Barton's napkin remained unnoticed on the table; it was evident she did not know she had any concern with it. She said, "Yes, sir," and "No, thank you," to the waiter. When the first course was removed she declined giving up her plate, remarking that she was very fond of soup and would prefer to make her dinner from it. When the finger-bowls made their appearance she observed to the waiter that she had a glass of water already. Rufus was in an agony throughout the meal; he blushed crimson with shame for Miss Barton, who sat there so thoroughly unconscious of anything being out-of-the-way. At the same time he could have annihilated Jacob for the grin which spread itself so visibly over his ebony countenance.

"Going out?" said Henrietta, meeting him in the hall awhile after the meal was over. "Upon my word—very gallant to your sister and her friend."

There was a solemnity actually tragic in Rufus' tones as he replied, "Your friend! Oh! Henrietta, I had expected better things of you!"

A day or two passed on, and then Mrs. Walcott, who was in the secret, and had been much amused by Fanny's performances, though protesting all the time that the whole affair was too absurd, put in execution a little plan of her own.

"Fanny, my dear child," she said, one morning, as they sat at breakfast, "we must improve the time now you are with us. I want to show you all the lions. Shall we begin with the museum? I think I have heard you express a desire to visit it."

"The museum!" exclaimed the horrified Rufus. "I cannot imagine you will find anything there to interest you, Miss Barton."

"Oh! that is because you have been there so often," said Fanny, with delightful *naïveté*; "you forget it is entirely new to me. Let us begin with the museum, by all means."

"Rufus," said Mrs. Walcott, "are you at liberty this morning? We shall need you to escort us." She spoke as coolly as if it was an every-day affair, and her son did not feel at liberty to refuse, though the temper of his mind was not, at the moment, exactly filial. The ladies were soon ready, and the party set out, Miss Walcott remaining at home, as she had

letters to write. Thankful, indeed, was her brother that the carriage hid them from public view. Fanny wore a small black velvet mantle, whose brownish tint was strongly suggestive of cotton somewhere in the fabric, a very modest squirrel victorine, and a bonnet of nondescript character. She was full of wonder and admiration at the crowds in Broadway, the gay shop-windows, and the handsome buildings. Rufus smiled at her simplicity. "What a child she is!" he thought. And a pretty child, he was inclined to admit, after studying her awhile. Frightfully dressed, and no more shape or style than a pumpkin; but if her position, education, and associations all her life had been totally different, she *might* have been wrought up into something very pleasing. Even now, perhaps, good models and abundant means might work great changes in her. She seemed to have enough of native sense. He grew somewhat reconciled to her before they reached the museum, but, as they alighted, his eye wandered searchingly up and down the street. "Fitz-James was brave," but he felt that to encounter, at that instant, a face he knew would be his utter destruction. He, Rufus Walcott, the traveled exquisite, the "gloss of fashion and the mould of form," escorting such a figure into the museum!

Mrs. Walcott was very kind in pointing out to our little heroine everything worthy of notice, and Mr. Rufus was pleased to see her attention limited to what might be termed the more respectable class of curiosities. She passed the Albino, the fat woman, and the bearded lady, with the very slightest notice. After an hour or two of delight on her part, they descended to the carriage, and, having happily entered it without being seen by any of the dreaded *monde*, drove rapidly home; the way being enlivened by an animated discussion between the two young people concerning the comparative merits of Mr. Longfellow and Mr. Bryant, whom Rufus had pointed out on the sidewalk. Fanny loved them both dearly, she said; she had cried over Evangeline and Hyperion, and doted on Kavanagh and Hiawatha, but she contended that Mr. Bryant was the truer poet, and nearer to the heart of nature. Rufus, a great admirer of the German-American, held the contrary opinion, and the dispute was carried on with spirit. Mrs. Walcott sided with Fanny, but her son remained unconvinced.

When Rufus came down, dressed for dinner, he found Henrietta in the parlor. "Poor boy!" she said, sympathizingly, "what a morning you must have had! I am sure I felt for you."

"Oh! it was not so bad," replied he, cheerfully. "One must be hospitable at all risks. She is a pretty little creature!"

"Yes, in that milkmaid style which I detest! red cheeks, curly hair; but no grace, no refinement."

"Henrietta," said Rufus, severely, "it is neither well-bred nor kind-hearted to speak thus of a guest." His sister laughed secretly.

Mr. Walcott spent the evening at home, for the first time since Fanny's arrival. Dinner over, Fanny produced a gray woolen sock, on which she proceeded to knit with admirable swiftness and diligence. "Haven't you any work, Henrietta?" she inquired.

"No," returned that young lady, "I never think of doing anything in the evening."

"That may answer for you," said Fanny, with composure; "but if I took things so leisurely I don't know when father's socks would be done," and she went on quietly with her work, while Henrietta turned away to stifle her laughter, and Rufus speculated within himself what sort of a satyr the father, who wore gray woolen hose, could possibly be. He had a pretty daughter, at any rate; a new edition of *La belle Sauvage*. 'Twas a pity she was so ignorant of the commonest forms of civilized life. He watched her, as she sat there, so busy. What long, curved eyelashes! what a sweet, peachy cheek! and the hands with which she plied those clumsy needles were so smooth and taper. "But I am getting too contemplative," he thought, presently. "Henrietta," he said, aloud, "can't you give us a little music?"

"Oh! not to-night," said she, indolently; "I am too weary: besides, you have heard everything I know a thousand times. Ask Fanny; I am confident she has pieces new to you." Rufus turned to Miss Barton, and, with respectful courtesy, begged her to play.

"I only play a very little," she assured him.

"So young ladies always say," he replied, with a smile.

"But you are probably accustomed to fashionable young ladies, who make it a prelude to a brilliant performance; in my case it is the literal truth. However, if you wish it, I can try, but one piece will probably satisfy you."

She took her seat at the piano, and Henrietta was in raptures at the blank expression that appeared in her brother's face as the "Jenny Lind Polka" broke the silence.

"Oh! ah! a very pretty, sprightly thing," said Rufus, as she concluded; "but you sing, Miss Barton, I am sure."

"A little, just as I play; not opera-music."

though;" and without further urging she began "The Old Folks at Home."

Poor Rufus! his hair fairly stood on end with horror; yet, by the time she had finished the second verse, he said to himself that she had a sweet little voice of her own, and looked so pretty while she sung; no simpler, no grimace. That sort of voice, well trained, would do ballads very nicely. At present it was in a frightfully uncultivated state. And what a taste she must have—negro melodies! But after all, poor thing! what could you expect from her education? She showed natural refinement in choosing the least vulgar and exceptionable specimens of the only music she had been taught.

"That will do, I think," said Fanny, when the last verse was concluded, and she retreated to her stocking and Henrietta, with whom she kept up a lively conversation. Mr. Walcott joined them, and discovered a good deal of sense and sprightliness in her remarks. At the end of the evening he was a wonder to himself. Four mortal hours had he passed in the society of a little ignorant rustic, listening to her ridiculous music, and watching her knit her father's stocking. Yet the time had not gone heavily.

Thenceforward the plan prospered. Few men can resist the combined influences of a pretty face and a sweet temper; indeed the first alone is too much for most of them. Fanny added to these charms a manner so deferential, so flattering to one who prided himself on his superior knowledge of the world; yet did she not hesitate to disagree with him, at times, and even to rally him on his pet foibles. He found her a perplexing, yet fascinating, study. It was so difficult to reconcile her evident refinement of character with her deep inbred ignorance of the canons of fashionable life. How was it possible that a taste so delicate and appreciative in literature should be so at fault in dress? That a mind which delighted in Tennyson could regard complacently that merino and that flaming bow? In trying to reconcile these inconsistencies he found himself involved in one far greater: that of being very nearly captivated by one entirely opposed to his ideal, differing essentially from all his preconceived fancies of what the person must be who could hope to interest him. Meanwhile there was no lack of gayety for our little friend. Her silks and her freshly-done-up Swiss muslin figured in many a brilliant gathering; and when Rufus' acquaintances remarked to him that she was a "deuced pretty girl," he felt as if he had received a personal compliment. He was always ready to escort the young ladies to any place of amusement; nay, he even sur-

vived it when they were at the Dusseldorf or one day, and a stylish group came in, every member of which he knew. He stood his ground manfully, though aware what sentiments that cloak and bonnet must excite in every well-informed mind. Then what pleasant, social talks they had of an evening; how delightful it was to see the fresh, smiling face each morning at the breakfast-table! Rufus ceased, after a time, all endeavor to reconcile the inconsistencies of her character, and surrendered himself to the happiness of the present, with yet happier hopes for the future.

CHAPTER IV.

ONE rainy afternoon, the three young people were sitting together; Mr. Walcott had been reading while the ladies worked, but now the book was laid aside for conversation. "How it rains!" exclaimed Henrietta, as a particularly violent dash against the window-panes attracted her attention.

"I like to hear it," said Fanny. "The patter of rain, as an old friend of mine used to say, is a melancholy sound, but one of the pleasantest of Nature's many pleasant ones."

"An old or a young friend, did you say, Miss Fanny?" inquired Rufus.

"An old friend, Mr. Walcott; a very rough-looking old farmer. At the time of saying it he wore a complete suit of sheeps-gray, and had at least half an inch of mud on his boots."

"Strange," he ejaculated, "that such a person should notice things of that sort!"

"And why strange?" said Fanny, with an indignant flash of her bright eyes. "I have heard you speak of snobbishness, Mr. Rufus, as if it were something very dreadful. What, I should like to know, can be *more* snobbish than to think that, because a person does not chance to have had your advantages in life, he must necessarily be incapable of appreciating anything delicate or beautiful? I could give you instances of the truest, the most poetical feeling for nature, and even in an untaught way for art among people whom *you* would not consider worthy of a single glance."

"But you will not, I presume," said he, laughing, "deny the refining tendencies of education and association? Or would your poetic plough-boys and your high-toned teamsters suffer from contact with minds less elevated?"

"I shall not argue," said Fanny, "if you take that stand. I am in earnest and you only jesting. But we have been reared so differently,

our ways of looking at things are so entirely dissimilar, that we shall never agree."

Rufus gazed at her with expressive eyes. "You shall teach me to think as you do," he said, in a voice so low that only Fanny heard him. She blushed violently and left the room. That blush and retreat decided her lover. He had been for some time trembling on the verge of a declaration, and only withheld by fears of Fanny's indifference; these promising tokens were enough for him.

"Henrietta," he said, turning suddenly to her, "I am about to do something which I hope you will approve."

"Well, what is it? To shave off your moustache? or to give me your diamond *solitaire*?"

"Do not jest, for I am serious. I intend to offer myself to Fanny Barton."

"What!" she exclaimed. "A girl like that! Rufus, I am astonished at you!"

"And why?" he asked, with deep displeasure.

"Because you are, without flattery, unusually well-bred and accomplished, and I *did* think that in the choice of a wife you would seek something a little higher and more refined."

"Henrietta!" said Rufus, in a tone that showed he was both hurt and offended.

"Look at me!" she answered; and throwing her arms round his neck, much to the discomfort of his immaculate collar and tie, she gave him a series of enthusiastic hugs and kisses, which would have been rapture to most individuals of his sex: he, being a brother, took it quietly.

"To think," he said, "of the absurd idea I had formed of her! What a freshness there is about her, Nett. So different from the stereotyped womanhood I have always known! No frivolity, envy, meanness—but good sense, good feeling—a good heart, in short! And then so ravishingly pretty. There is such a charm about everything she says and does." And he went on for half an hour to his own and his sister's vast content. Fanny, meanwhile, was regretting bitterly the foolish course she had pursued. If it were only not for that! But to have come on purpose to "give him a lesson," how indelicate, how dreadful! She had thought it was all a fine bit of mischief to impose on Rufus; she had not dreamed of getting her own happiness involved. If she had only come on an ordinary visit, and then he had liked her, how easy it would all have been; and now it was so hard and trying!

"Henrietta," she said, when that young lady having broken off her brother's raptures in the

midst, came up stairs in search of her guest, "don't you think I had better resume my own character once more?"

"Why," said her friend, mischievously, "has the end we proposed to ourselves been achieved? Has Rufus tendered his heart, hand, &c.?"

"How foolish of you!" replied Fanny, with crimsoning cheeks; "there was no such thing thought of. It was only to teach your brother that a person might be just endurable, provided she had sense, even if she were from the rural districts and imbued with their peculiarities. That has been sufficiently proved; Mr. Walcott has been very polite, and talked to me a good deal, and we are quite friendly. So had I not better drop my role and appear in *propria persona*? It was a foolish piece of business, and we have carried it far enough."

"Perhaps we have," said Henrietta, much amused. "Poor little soul! what a trial it must have been to you; all your charms obscured for five long weeks! It makes me think of that old story of the Saxon Elfrida, whose husband wanted her to dress herself shabbily when the king gave them a visit, that her beauty might not attract him. But she wasn't as complaisant as you, Fanny, and decked herself out in her best, determined to make an impression; and the king fell in love, and destroyed her husband in order to obtain her."

"Horrid thing!" cried Fanny.

"Do you think so? Judging from my experience, I should say her behavior was very natural. If you had seen the way in which some married women I know devote themselves to a Baronet or an Hon. Mr., when such a rare bird shows itself in our Transatlantic circles, you would say that a king might move them to anything. But about your own case, Fanny; I think you may as well return to yourself, and, as we are going to Mrs. Haight's to-night, you will have an excellent opportunity to make your *debut*."

At the proper hour, that evening, there was a grand ceremony of the toilet, Mrs. Walcott, Henrietta, and their maid assisting. Fanny's hair was arranged with the utmost care and elegance, and her pretty person invested with the rose-colored silk and the pearls. She made quite a sensation at Mrs. Haight's, and two or three young ladies who had carefully looked over her head during the last few weeks, now came forward and reminded her of those dear old times at the Spingler, and how happy they all were together. But will it be credited? Rufus, on whose behalf and for whose surprise his mother and sister had taken all this pains,

never once noticed the change in Fanny's attire! He was too much absorbed in watching her face and listening to her words, to think or care what her dress might be.

I don't know exactly when he declared himself, nor how he managed to overcome Fanny's scruples about the propriety of accepting him after having come, as she accused herself of

doing, to seek him; but he must have done it. For a day or two afterward, when Henrietta was rallying him on the lesson he had received, he answered,

"Yes! a lesson that ought to last me my lifetime! And, to insure me against forgetting it, I shall keep the teacher always at hand to remind me."

BABY'S AUNT.

BY ANNA TAYLOR.

I COULD scarcely forgive Robert Selwyn for falling in love with and marrying my pretty sister Nellie, and then like the ogre in the fairy tale carrying her off to his castle in the mountains, or at least to some place where I seldom saw her. So I was not at all sorry when Nellie came home for her first visit, to find that business had detained her husband in the city. How glad I was to see Nellie again, to feel her arms around my neck, and her kisses upon my cheek as of old; and when her baby was brought into the house, in the arms of its thick-lipped, dusky-faced nurse, we all clustered around him, admiring his round, symmetrical limbs, draped in lace, and muslin, and embroidery, his golden hair trained into the cunningest of French rolls on the top of his head, and falling in the brightest of clustering rings down beside his pink cheeks, his great, staring blue eyes, and his mouth as arch and crimson as Nellie's own! Grandpapa patted his cheeks and called him a fine little fellow, Miss Grey said he was a proper nice child, and I thought that I could love him for Nellie's sake. But when I stooped down and shook my ringlets in his face, he put his arm around her neck and looked at me so defiantly, that I am sure the little rogue made up his mind at once that we were rivals, and that he would have Nellie all to himself in spite of me. A terrible despotism was his week's reign in our household. It seemed strange to me how such a mere morsel of humanity could keep the house in such a perpetual turmoil. Twice, during that memorable visit, did he fall down the steps into the passage at imminent risk of life and limbs; once was a physician sent for in all haste to extract a kernel of corn he had contrived to insert in one of his nostrils; and at another time he was only saved from strangulation, by Miss Grey's presence of mind in running her fingers down his throat and removing a button which he had found on the carpet and conveyed surreptitiously to his mouth, that depository for all infantine treasures.

One might have supposed, from these perpetually recurring accidents, that he was meditating upon the great problem of existence, and experimenting as to the speediest means of terminating it. There were passages in my favorite

books, which I had promised myself much pleasure in reading to Nellie, but never did I take up poem, or romance, or essay, but that baby contrived to distract her attention completely from the whole matter by his laughter or his weeping. If we went out for a ramble, Nellie's thoughts were constantly wandering back to her boy at home; so though the brook had the same pleasant murmur we listened to in our girlhood, though the woods were just as shady and the wild flowers just as sweet, yet the scene had lost its enchantment for her, and could never detain her long from little Philip.

Old friends called, and that baby had to be brought forward and examined and admired and petted and caressed; over and over again the color of his hair and eyes was discussed, the number of his teeth ascertained, and a decision arrived at as to whether he most resembled papa, or mamma. Over and over again, elderly ladies offered sage advice, and the younger ones indulged in a style of talk popularly supposed to be understood by babies, clipping and mutilating their words, as if, like Mrs. Plornish, they fancied that would make the English language intelligible to one who could not otherwise understand it: and wonderful was it accounted when, parrot-like, he lisped the few syllables he had learned to speak. In fact that baby was the principal figure in every scene, whereas I thought his size and capacity should have placed him in the background or perspective.

I suppose I shall be thought selfish, but it is not pleasant, after being petted and spoiled all one's life-time, to be coolly set aside and supplanted in every one's heart by—a baby. Papa used to take some interest in my affairs, but he is now wholly wrapped up in his grandchild, and I think confidently expects that he will one day occupy the Presidential chair. Miss Grey has set her heart upon his becoming a minister, and has devised her small means, which would have otherwise been left as a legacy to me, to educate him for that profession; and as for Nellie, though she once loved me as a sister, I am sure she looks upon and speaks of me now—would you believe it?—only as “Baby's Aunt.”

BETTER THAN A KING.

BY MRS. M. A. DENISON.

A GREAT gray kitchen—gray, for it was night, and the two candles did not send the flame very far; a wide-backed settle; a smell of herbs drying somewhere; a cat on the hearth; a soft, warm breeze coming in from the west windows; the sound of rustling leaves; a country maiden holding in her hand a brown book, whose yellow pages smell of age; a handsome peasant listening. There's a picture for you. Ralph, his name—Maud, hers.

"And so," read Maud, preparing to shut the old book, "the king and queen lived happily forever after."

Maud was a merry girl, and the village teacher. She gave the farmer's children lessons in spelling and arithmetic, and taught them to hemstitch and gather. Her own store of knowledge was somewhat limited. Ralph used to watch her as she sat, her bright brown hair tucked behind a little cap, her blue eyes tender with feeling, and her rosy lips parting often in smiles. Ralph himself was no common specimen of manhood. He was tall, broad-shouldered, with a pleasant countenance and the best of hearts. He had but one failing, he was too fond of the tap-room, and it promised to be a growing evil with him.

"I wish I was a king," said Ralph, one night, after his attention had been chained by a glowing story.

"You are happier as you are, Ralph," returned Maud.

"Oh! no; I don't like work—that is, work that wears one out and makes one so tired," was his reply. "Kings must be blessed mortals—free from all care—no one to say them nay—no work to do—all pleasure, all happiness—yes, I wish I was a king."

Maud looked at him, and he did not see her, for his eyes were building castles, and his face was in the shadow. Maud admired him in her heart, "What a beautiful head he has got!" she thought to herself, "and what long lashes!" Then poor Maud sighed a little, for she did not like to think.

The next day, busy at his hoeing, with perhaps a little pain in his good, broad shoulders, he said again, "Yes, I wish I was a king. It seems to me I was not born to be a farmer. How tiresome it is to hoe! It makes one hungry

too. Well, dinner will soon be ready, and then—I shall only have greens, and beef, and dump-lings, while kings live on the fat of the land—aye! and the ocean too, as for that matter.

Presently the horn sounded. Ralph hastened to obey it. He met Maud, who held his little brother and sister by the hand.

"How tired and heated you look!" she said.

"Yes, I'm both," he replied.

"Still want to be a king, I suppose?" she said, archly.

"Yes, indeed. I wish I was a king," he answered.

"Poor Ralph!" she said, pitifully, and passed on. The great kitchen looked cool, for the floor had been washed and sanded. The apple boughs outside shaded the nice windows; the paper curtains rattled; the board was spread with sweet bread, homemade, and goodly rows of smoking dishes. Ralph washed his face in a great pan of clear, cold water, and for a moment felt grateful and refreshed. But still he was not happy, not even with the pretty face of Maud smiling opposite.

"It is nothing for you to sit in a cool room and teach the children," he said, after dinner, in reply to some remark.

"If you were to try it once," she said, good-humoredly, "you would want to get back to your potato hoeing."

"What, is it really hard work, then?" he asked again.

"It is not easy by any means," was the reply.

"But you always look as if you were easy enough."

"Because I have learned to be contented," was the reply. The answer echoed in Ralph's brain as he walked off: but for all that he did not stop wishing that he was a king. That afternoon he paid a visit to the tap-room. It was very sultry, and, as he sat in the pleasant apartment, he thought the beer never tasted better. Suddenly, as he was raising the mug to his lips, there appeared a grotesque face on the top, and as it looked at him it winked and smiled mysteriously. As Ralph gazed in wonderment the face grinned more broadly, and said with quick words and sharp voice,

"Want to be a king?"

"Yes," said Ralph.
"Set me down then and wait," was the response.

He set the mug down and closed the lid. A strange feeling came over him. He was helpless, but felt himself lifted and borne aloft. It was not long before consciousness came back to him. He opened his eyes—his wish was granted—he was a king. What splendors surrounded him! He was lying on a stately couch, all gold and silver and delicate net-work. The morning seemed to have dawned, and yet there was no stir in the royal household. As far as he could see he was dazzled. Chairs of velvet, gilded and carved, chairs of silk and satin, pictures behind hangings of crimson lustre, ornaments exquisitely fashioned, all beauty and profusion. He lay there wondering dreamily until a silvery sound smote his ear. In a few minutes his courtiers surrounded him, each seemingly ready to assist him.

"Well, this is not very pleasant, not to be master of one's own limbs," he said, to himself, as one placed this garment, and another that, so that by the time he was dressed he was so weary that his frame ached with the endless pulls and pushings; for though all things were done politely, and not without much compliment, still he did not feel like a free man. Besides he had a sense of weariness which he could not account for, a dull pain in the head which was very hard to bear, and a sensation of great fatigue.

"Your majesty must have ridden too hard yesterday," said one of the courtiers.

"Your majesty drank wine too late at the supper, last night," said another; from which he gathered that probably he had been toying.

He sat down to a sumptuous service alone, his courtiers ranged around him. A glass of wine was poured out, for he felt as if needing something to steady his shaking nerves. Suddenly, as he raised it to his lips, he shuddered. An unearthly thrill ran through him.

"Bring the taster," he cried, as from some new impulse. A slender, beautiful youth came near—he tasted the wine—he turned pale, staggered, and was borne away. The wine was poisoned.

"If this is one of the penalties of station," said the king to himself, "I had rather go back to my ploughing;" but the matter was not so easy; a king he was, and a king he must be till he had thoroughly learned the lessons of royalty.

Why should I give the day's experience, save to say that at night he was a jaded and worn-out king? And as he possessed a double con-

sciousness, he wished from his heart that he could go back to the old farm and hoe potatoes again. A hunt was arranged for the next day; that the king thought might be a source of some pleasure; at any rate, the hedge of etiquette by which he was environed would be somewhat broken down. They were off as early as strict court rules would allow, and the king felt a wonderfully exhilarating influence as the cool wind blew across his temples, and he saw the early dew glistening on the hills and the fields. They passed a little school-house. In the doorway stood Maud, looking like a bright rose. The king scanned her curiously. Surely he had never half noticed her before. He stopped, smiled, when she in a sudden terror turned away, her cheek blanching, and hurried within the school-room.

"Are even the innocent girls afraid of me?" thought the king. "My reputation must have been a bad one. Well, I'll not force her to notice me; of course she doesn't know—how should she? But I declare, I never saw that Maud was so pretty before. There isn't a lady at the court so fresh and handsome."

Presently they were away off chasing the deer. "Well, this is fine sport," thought the king; "after all, it isn't so bad to be at the head of a great nation, if we can once in a while have such good times as this. What! ho?—what is the matter here?" he cried out, as the man next to him, one of the first officers in the kingdom, reeled and fell from his saddle.

They picked him up and examined him sorrowfully. The man was dead. There was, however, a shout heard not far off—they had found the murderer and now brought him forward.

"What didst thou do this for?" questioned the king, angrily.

"The arrow was designed for thy treacherous self," replied the forester.

"Hear him!" shouted the king, his anger stirred; "take him away and have him dealt with. We'll have thee broken on the wheel, sirrah."

"If I had only performed my mission I should not have cared," cried the audacious fellow.

And now the king was in misery all the time. He started at a shadow, almost at a tree, thinking it might be an assassin; he looked warily round upon his courtiers. In more than one face he read treachery, and their fawning manners disgusted him. "Truly there is no safety out of a potato-patch," he said, mournfully. "Would I were Ralph the farmer's boy again."

A week passed by, and they wanted him to marry.

"Whom shall I have?" he said, partly to himself; but one of his ministers heard him and stepped before him.

"May it please your majesty," he said, "proposals have been sent from the king of Spain, who wishes an alliance formed between your majesty and her royal highness."

The king listened astonished.

"But we have never seen her," he said; and then the prime minister went into a long discussion concerning reasons of state, till the king was weary and came very near falling asleep. "Plague take all kingdoms," he thought to himself, "if these are the trials that beset the man who sits on a throne. They won't even let me marry whom I please. Not content with dressing me, feeding me, trying to poison and to shoot me, they must needs put a wife beside me whom I don't know, or care anything about. I won't be led by the nose in this way, if I am a king."

So he thought of a plan which was to disguise himself, and take a journey to Spain that he might see his future wife for himself; "And if I don't like her," he quoth, "nothing shall force me to have her." He had not ridden a mile with his few attendants on his new journey, before he met a procession. He had forgotten that it was May day, and here were the village maids turned out to celebrate the happy time. Leading them was Maud, the favorite Queen of May. Did she ever look so pretty before? Her kirtle snow-white, her cap replaced by a little hat of chip, from under which hung her beautiful brown curls, and on which was placed a lovely wreath of newly-opened roses. All pleasant breezes seemed to blow around her, and the exquisite scents of the flowers emanated from her queenly little person. There was a wonderful brilliancy in her eyes, her cheeks were red, her lips parted in happy smiles, her whole being seemed an incarnation of the season.

"That is one of the prettiest creatures I have ever seen," said a courtier to the king. But his majesty was pale and moody. He had felt his whole heart go out toward dear Maud, sweet Maud, whose hand he had taken so often in his own without one quickening impulse, and he was angry that he had not noticed her charms before. The impulse was strong upon him to call her by her name, when he first saw her; but he thought of his new estate, of his courtiers seated beside him, and the proceeding seemed undignified. As he went on his way, however, he sighed so frequently as to attract the notice of his attendants, who smiled at each other, but wisely kept their opinions to themselves.

The king was utterly disgusted at the sight of his Spanish *fiancee*. He found her high-nosed, thick-lipped, and merciless with her tongue. Be it known that she took pains to appear to the least possible advantage, because she had some little private project of her own in hand, which this marriage would effectually break up.

"I don't like her," said the king.

"But reasons of state?"

"Hang your reasons of state!" cried he, like a bluff, jolly old farmer; "I tell you I won't have her, and there's an end of the matter!"

In vain the chief advisers talked of policy, of defeat, of the thousand and one things that might happen if he would, and that wouldn't happen if he didn't. He turned a deaf ear to it all, for there was but one image in his thoughts—the image of pretty Maud, the May Queen.

"I'll have her or none," he said to himself.

After awhile, however, his ministers and courtiers teased him so, that he reluctantly gave them a hope that ultimately he might accede to their wishes. Meantime he had as much as he could do to keep on the alert against those who he was sure were thirsting for his life. His head was filled with state papers, petitions, and the myriad cares that he was far too conscientious to throw off. Only once he descended from his dignity, and managed to escape the notice of the jealous eyes watching him on every side; and, donning an old shirt, marvelously like the one in which he hoed potatoes, he went shyly into the town where was the homestead of an old farmer he had called his father. Breathlessly he stood at the window of the little school-room. There was nobody there, for the scholars had been dismissed. There was her seat, however; the chair with the claw feet that had been loaned from the best room at home. There was her desk with her inkstand on it, and the pen her fingers had used. There was her coquettish little black silk apron hanging upon a nail. Oh! how mute but suggestive were all these things! They spoke of her presence. Should he go farther? Yes, he *must* see Maud, she who possessed his whole soul; so off he went, and was passing that identical potato-patch, when he saw a sight that almost turned him into stone. There, under the shadow of the one grand old apple tree that stood alone in the field, sat Maud, leaning against the trunk; while, bending over her, with a world of love in his dark eyes, stood the counterpart of himself, Ralph, the farmer's boy, speaking eventful words. Then Maud glanced up, her gray eyes

boasting an answer in the honest face, the blush mantling her delicate skin, her lips like scarlet threads, and both were happy. But the sight filled the poor *pseudo* king with rage. He hurried back almost like a madman, cursing himself for his foolishness in giving up real for imaginary happiness. He astonished his courtiers by a greater want of good manners—for a king—than ever, and grew harsh and morose, so that there were serious thoughts of putting him out of the way in some manner. At last his folly reached to such a pitch, that he declared he would have Maud, the schoolmistress, before any high-born lady in the land; and he gave orders, secretly, that she should be captured and brought to the palace. This was easily done, for in those days the word of a king was law in such cases, and men dared not sue for justice. The pretty, innocent Maud was taken from her school and forced away she knew not whither. Half-frightened to death, she was set down by the king's palace, and then conveyed by a private entrance to one of the most magnificent apartments in the whole mansion. As the poor child stood there, pale, indignant, frightened, yet wondering at the splendors on every hand, several persons attired with the utmost elegance entered, bearing caskets on salvers, which they deposited on ivory tables. Then came women also habited regally, holding rich brocades embroidered with jewels. These they spread out till every couch gleamed with rare and sparkling beauty. But poor Maud stood restless, excited, and unhappy. What did all these shows mean? All horrible things which she had read throughed her imagination; she trembled, and tears filled her eyes. Presently she heard soft music, then doors opened, and the king, magnificently appareled, entered. Maud started back with fear in her looks, but his majesty gently advanced.

"Sweet maiden," he said, "those who have found favor in the king's eyes should not shrink in his presence. We have long known your virtues, and often dwell upon your beauty. Come, therefore, and share our throne, for we offer you honorable marriage."

Abashed, surprised, Maud stood looking upon him in strange bewilderment. The king woo her, the peasant's daughter? Impossible; she must be dreaming.

"Oh! your majesty, let me go home," she cried, imploringly. "I am but a simple peasant girl, who, having through favor received a better education than falls to the lot of my peers, your majesty may think deserving of greater favor. But, I assure you, I have no

wish to leave my humble home—my lowly lot contents me."

"Your words but make me more desirous to call you mine," replied the king, trembling now with eagerness and fear. "I know your station, and your modesty enhances your worth. My word is law, and it has gone forth that the beautiful Maud, the sweetest maiden in all the kingdom, shall be my own lawful queen."

"Oh! most gracious sire," cried Maud, her face growing white, "you surely will not put such an edict into effect without my sanction. Consider that every maiden should have the right of disposing herself, and I—I—am——"

The rich color had rushed back to her cheek; her eyes were downcast. The king waited frowningly; she looking up and seeing no mercy, ran and threw herself at his feet.

"Oh! your majesty," she cried, and her voice was choked with tears and maiden shame, "my word has passed. I love and am betrothed to an honest farmer; I would rather be his little wife than a queen. Do not force me to be miserable—to break Ralph's heart—oh! sire, be merciful—be merciful!"

The king turned his face away. He was half-crazed with anger at his own folly—with his passion. Yet how could he resist that gentle voice, those pleading eyes, and be a man? He lifted her, and before speaking threw open the lids of the boxes that stood before her. She started back almost blinded with the brilliance of costly gems, diamonds, and precious stones, a wondrous collection.

"Maud, these shall be yours—they are fitting for my queen—these fabrics," and he pointed to the brocades, and tissues, and laces, "you will reign supreme in a heart that adores you; the half of my throne shall be yours; the hearts of millions; for all will love you. Maud, do not drive me to despair; seldom has monarch so pleaded."

But she stood steadfast.

"I do not prize the splendors, the jewels, or the throne," she said, with tremulous sweetness, "so much as one little word from my Ralph. Oh! sire, do not detain me, he is breaking his heart at my absence," and she wept bitterly.

The king grew hard, relentless, and cruel. His very soul seemed turning to adamant; murder was in his thoughts, for he hated the man she loved.

"No," he thundered—"no, again no! You are here, you are in my power, and here you shall stay." A scream so shrill, so ear-piercing sounded, that—well, rubbing his eyes violently,

Ralph found himself sitting upright on the hard bench in the tap-room, and saw the bar-maid who laughed at the top of her voice.

"Such a scrimaging as ye must ha' been into!" she cried, as soon as she could regain her gravity; "'twas worth the price to Lancaster Fair jest to watch you're motions, man. What ha' ye been dreaming about, a fight or a bargain? Oh! it was sport to see ye;" and again she relapsed into a wilder peal of laughter.

Very slowly Ralph regained his scattered senses; but in his strange dream he had gained a new, a delicious experience. For when, as he neared his father's house, he met Maud coming

from her school, his sleepy eyes grew bright with pleasure. She, looking down, only said, "Oh! Ralph, you have been to the tap-room again."

"Only promise me you'll love me, Maud, and I'll promise never to go in the tap-room again. Maud?"

She looked up. He remembered that glance—he had seen it in his dream—he knew now what she had known for a long, long time, she did love him. Maud often wondered afterward at Ralph's fluency upon the subject of kings and queens: but he did not tell her of his dream till long after they were married.

REDMAN'S RUN.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

[Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1860, by Frank Lee Benedict, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.]

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 120.

CHAPTER VI.

I SAW Alice sitting at the foot of the fall, looking pale and thoughtful. The persecution which she had endured for the past weeks was telling upon her health and spirits. I went quietly toward her, with that one great hope stronger in my heart than it had ever been before. The smile with which she greeted me was sad even to painfulness, but she made room for me on the rock beside her with her customary frank courtesy.

"No," I said, "please walk with me; the fall roars so one cannot even think."

"And that is pleasant sometimes," she answered, wearily; but took the hand I had extended, and allowed me to lead her along the path which reached the height above the fall, by an easier ascent than the cliff that we had clambered up the morning after her arrival.

"It is a lovely day," she said, "and these old woods are very pleasant."

"It is my favorite season—far more beautiful to me than spring."

"And always was to me; but nothing looks as pleasant as it did once."

"You are more out of spirits than usual to-day," I said.

She shook her head sadly, but made no reply. I saw the heavy tears gather under her eyelids, but she did not allow them to fall.

We walked on along the summit of the hill, which was covered with hemlock woods. The roar of the torrent had died into a pleasant murmur, and the waning sunlight shot through the arches of the old trees like light through the stained windows of a cathedral.

"Shall we sit down?" I said. "You look very tired."

"I am," she replied, "very."

"Your mother has not been well to-day?"

"No: one of her wretched nervous headaches. She had gone to sleep before I came out, and will wake quite well again."

A long silence stole over us. My heart was so full that I had forgotten I was not speaking, and Alice sat quite near me, her eyes cast down

with a mournful expression, which had grown upon her during the past weeks.

Then all at once the concealed passion, the great love, which had absorbed my whole being, found relief in speech. What I said I know not, but my words must have been burning and abrupt. Alice shrunk farther away until a wild fear shot across my heart, which deprived me of all strength.

"Alice!" I cried, "have I deceived myself? Do you not love me?"

She covered her face with her hands, and the great tears streamed from between the delicate fingers. I caught her to my breast with passionate adjurations.

"Only tell me that I am not mistaken—tell me that it is not all a vain dream?"

She grew calmer, and her head, with its weight of golden curls, drooped upon my shoulder.

"It is not a dream," she whispered; "you are not deceived."

I was silent from excess of feeling! Alice's tears were falling gently still, and there we stood, so young, so helpless, but strong in the love, which, with either, was no passing dream, no idle passion of youth, but the true love which comes once in a life time to every human heart, knows neither change nor diminution, and is as enduring as life itself.

Suddenly Alice disengaged herself from my arms.

"My father, Mr. Redman!" she exclaimed; "I had forgotten them. Oh! Paul, Paul!"

"Do you fear them?" I asked. "You are strong, and brave, why do you tremble so?"

"It is not for myself; but my courage gives way when I think of my poor mother."

"She cannot suffer more than she has already done."

"You know—she has told you."

"Not all, but I could easily imagine the rest."

Alice sank down upon the bank again; now that her first agitation was over she began to tremble.

"You can advise me now, and you will, Paul? I can talk to you—oh! my heart has been so

full these past weeks, and not a soul to whom I could unburthen it, for I have to strengthen my poor mother instead of receiving encouragement from her."

"Why did you not talk with me?"

"You know I could not—you know——"

"Did you not feel that I loved you?"

"You seemed so cold and self-possessed, I did not dare to think! Then my mother told me how pale you were that morning, and——"

She did not finish her sentence, but the glow on her cheek was clearer than words.

"And did you hope that I would speak?"

"I don't know—I can't tell! Sometimes there seemed no escape, and I wondered if it would not be better for me to go away from here, to give myself up to my father's plans."

"And now?"

"Ah! now, you will advise me—I can trust to you!"

I was not a youth in her eyes—I was the lover to whom she could freely confide her happiness!

"Tell me everything that has passed, Alice, that I may judge."

"There is little that you did not hear from my mother. You know how my acquaintance with your cousin began—oh! Paul, he has given me no peace since. Now, he and my father profess to think there is a tacit engagement between us—they even ask me to name the day when I will become his wife."

"And what have you said?"

"I have repulsed him, pleaded with my father, refused, but they go on just as before."

"Does my cousin understand how averse you are to this marriage?"

"He knows it well—I have told him that I did not care for him."

"You can only persist in your refusal. In this country girls are not dragged to the altar."

"You smile, you almost give me hope. But what can I do?"

"Refuse Maurice peremptorily—insist upon your father's taking you away from here."

"But my mother? Oh! he will make her suffer so—he is my father, and I love him; but she has been a passive slave so long that she does not think it possible to oppose him in anything. Then he says that your uncle has some hold upon him. What can it be?"

I hesitated a little, I did not like to pain the daughter's heart by my suspicions.

"Tell me," she urged; "do tell me, Paul!"

"You have a fortune independent of your father?"

"Ah! your cousin knows that well!"

"It is possible that in some transaction with my uncle, your father has made use of your money and hesitates to have you know it."

"Is that all? Why, I would give him the whole, if it would procure him a moment's happiness—I hate the very thought of my money."

"And I have none," I said; "I am very poor, Alice."

"Oh! I am glad," she exclaimed, "so glad! Then this fortune will procure me a little satisfaction!"

I shook my head—I was more worldly wise than she, and the thought of deriving a fortune from my wife was not pleasant to me. But the feeling was only a momentary one, and we both forgot the troubles which surrounded us in the happiness that had unfolded in our hearts.

I need not describe that day, I have no reader who cannot picture its delight; but when the sunset came on, and it was time for us to return, the miserable present stared us again in the face. I had told Alice all my plans, and found in them new pleasure from her sympathy; we had talked blithely of the future, and it was hard to come back to the dreary reality.

"I almost fear," Alice whispered; "I have so much to lose now that I tremble for myself."

"Only be firm and true to yourself!"

"I shall not falter, Paul; indeed you may trust me."

"Then comes this long, dreary winter, when I shall be alone."

"Not so far away but you can sometimes see me; after that you will be in the city."

"If you have not forgotten me."

"He begins to mock me already," she said, laughingly, but more serious thoughts checked her gaiety. "We must go back to the house, it is growing late."

"Shall we tell your mother at once of our conversation?"

"Immediately, Paul: I never had a secret from her in my life. Perhaps that will make her stronger—my poor, poor mother!"

We went back to the house, and, finding that Mr. Morgan had not returned, Alice bade me go with her to her mother's room.

Mrs. Morgan was sitting in an arm-chair, still languid from pain, looking even more wearied and worn-out than usual. She started nervously, as was her habit, when the door opened; but when she saw us standing there, radiant with happiness, a strange mingling of joy and terror swept over her face.

"What is it?" she asked, brokenly. "What has happened?"

Alice stole to her side and whispered some-

thing in her ear; while I took her hand with the tender affection I might have felt for my own mother.

"We are very happy," I said; "Alice——"

"Don't tell me!" she interrupted, with frightened haste, while the tremor which shook her frame at the slightest agitation seized her with unusual violence. "Don't tell me, Paul, I cannot hear a word."

"Oh! mother!" Alice exclaimed, in a grieved tone.

"I know, darling," she said, with a passion of love very touching; "I love you so much, my child, but you must not tell me any secret."

"But we wish to talk with you," I said, "to ask your advice."

"I am not fit—a child could guide you better than I! You do not know how weak I am, what a terrible coward—spare me, do spare me."

Alice flung her arms about the poor woman's neck with a gush of pitying tears.

"Don't cry, my daughter," she said, in a troubled voice; "it is very hard for you to bear, but you do not know what I suffer! I lie night after night without closing my eyes; and every hour in the day I am tortured by plans, which are to make you as wretched as myself."

"Mother," Alice replied, firmly, "you shall not be tortured any more—there must be an end to all this! Either my father shall leave you in peace, or we will go away, you and I—let him keep my fortune. Paul and I——"

A maidenly blush completed her sentence, and oh! how beautiful she was in the courage inspired by affection.

"Can always care for you," I said, supplying the words she had checked herself in saying, "I am young and strong—we will be happy, nobody shall hinder us!"

The poor woman looked from one to another, weeping a little and trembling still, but with a more hopeful, courageous feeling than she had known for years.

"Could we do this?" she asked, wonderingly; "could we indeed?"

"And we will, mother," Alice replied; "you have suffered enough—the rest of your life shall not be made a season of torture through your love for me."

"If I could only save you," she cried, in her mother's anguish, "I would endure anything; but live and see you suffer—I cannot, cannot bear it!"

"All that is over now; I see my duty clearly, mother, and I shall perform it."

"What will you do?" she asked, beginning to

tremble anew. "You will be rash—oh! Alice, take care."

"Have no fear, mother! I want you to lie down now—do not open your bed-room door, even if my father commands you—I will come to you when all is settled."

"What shall you do, Alice?" she questioned, in a sort of frightened wonder.

"We are going away from Redman's Run to-night, mother."

The poor lady gave a cry of joy and sank back in her chair, weeping convulsively.

"If we could, if we only could!"

"We shall, mother! If you and I go on foot, we leave this place to-night."

"Oh! Paul," faltered Mrs. Morgan. "She will ruin herself—her father will shut her up—will bring a minister here and force her to marry that man!"

"Not while there is a law in the land," I replied; "you are weak, and have suffered so much you cannot reason clearly about it. I have advised Alice what to do—if she is firm, and you will only second her, she is saved."

"I will," Mrs. Morgan exclaimed, with more energy than I had ever seen her exhibit; "God help me, I will! I have been weak, wicked, but I will make myself strong."

"Go to bed now, mother," Alice said, "and try to sleep."

"I will go and pray," she replied, very pale still, but tearless and calm; "God will tell me what to do! May He bless you, my children, as your poor, weak mother does—my two dear children!"

She kissed us both tenderly and went away to her bed-room. We heard the key turn slowly in the lock—she was safe, at least, for a time.

"I will go to my chamber," Alice said, "and wait for my father."

"Are you frightened?" I asked.

"No, Paul; I am calmer than I have been for weeks! You have shown me my duty, I shall not falter! My mother shall not be sacrificed: I might bear much myself, but she must have peace."

I pressed my lips to her forehead with a feeling of reverence. It was wonderful to see that timid girl so suddenly transformed into a strong, courageous woman.

"This may be our only farewell," she said.

For a little time we were both overpowered by the pain of this separation, but it did not weaken either.

"I shall write to you," I said. "I would send the letters to your mother, but they will only bring some new suffering upon her."

"Don't do that—she must be spared."

"Send for me if any new difficulty arises, I will come to you at once. Promise, Alice."

"I will, indeed I will!"

There were more farewells, many parting words; and when I felt upon my cheek not only Alice's tears but my own, I could not deem them any stain upon my manhood.

CHAPTER VII.

I WENT down stairs, and very soon I heard the carriage drive up to the door. Then came Maurice's voice in the hall, gay and exulting—I knew that he had persuaded Mr. Morgan into some decisive measure.

The pompous man went on up stairs, and Maurice hurried into the library where I was standing.

"Where is my uncle?" he asked, insolently.

"Here I am," Mr. Redman called from his study, before I could answer.

Maurice strode to the door which led from the library to my uncle's study, exclaiming in a triumphant tone,

"It is all settled! Morgan has really come to the point at last—we are to be married in a month."

"I congratulate you," my uncle replied; "you have won a charming bride."

"Yes; but I don't think I shall put up very patiently with the airs and graces I have endured for some time past."

"Paul is there," I heard my uncle say, in a tone of caution.

"The deuce take Paul!" he retorted, angrily. "Go to your own room," he said, turning around to me, "you've no business here!"

"Nevertheless it is my pleasure to stay," I replied. "My uncle has bid me make this house my home until spring. I intend to do so, nor shall I permit you to insult me by word or look."

He muttered an oath, but I heard my uncle check him, and, with another fearful execration, he closed the door violently between the two rooms.

I went up stairs again. As I passed Alice's room, I heard her father's voice loud in anger, then hers in reply, calm and respectful, but unchangeably firm.

I stood by a window in the farther end of the hall waiting for what would follow. At last, the door of Alice's room opened, and her father rushed out, exclaiming,

"I will see your mother, at least she shall not brave me!"

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"If you speak harshly to her," Alice replied, "just so surely will I take her and go away! Be firm, father—the worst is over—I know your secret, and do not care for it."

"Settle it your own way!" he exclaimed, violently; "I wash my hands of the whole matter! You are an ungrateful daughter."

"Father," was her answer, "please go down stairs and tell Mr. Redman—I will follow in an instant. Remember, I leave this house to-night, if I go on foot and lead my mother by the hand! I will be no longer in the power of that bad man—I would not trust my life in his reach."

Mr. Morgan went down stairs muttering, but fairly conquered. Like all petty tyrants he was a coward, and Alice's determined manner had subdued him at once.

"Alice," I whispered, when he had gone.

She hurried toward me with a low cry, and I drew her into her mother's room.

"What happened?" I asked.

"It was as you thought—all is settled! I must go at once—I dare not give myself time to think. Oh! Paul, am I doing right? Will you love me?"

"You need no answer—Alice—darling! But go, I cannot bear to see you lose a moment."

Alice went to her mother's door and knocked.

"It is I, mamma. Open, please."

Mrs. Morgan obeyed, and came out white and wan.

"Is it over?" she gasped.

"Everything! Ring for your maid—have the trunks packed at once—we are going away."

"Is it true, Alice, can it be?"

"It is indeed! Only have courage—dear, dear mother!"

She drew me out of the room. Only once, when we reached the head of the stairs, did she begin to tremble, but a single word reassured her.

"Yes, I will go," she said; "it is for you, Paul, and for my mother! Be where you can hear everything—do, do, Paul, I shall have no courage else."

She sped lightly down the stairs, and I saw her enter the study.

I descended into the library—it was all dark there—the door that led into the study was ajar, and I sat quietly down to await the end of that conversation.

"There's Alice!" exclaimed Mr. Morgan, in an agitated, fidgety way; "she must explain for herself—I believe the devil has helped her."

"Here I am, father," Alice replied, calmly, advancing.

"This is very strange, Miss Morgan," my

“one said, in a tone through which pierced his baffled rage.

“In your heart you cannot think so, Mr. Redman.”

“Let me speak with you alone, Miss Alice,” pleaded Maurice.

“Yes,” said my uncle, “let us leave these young people, Morgan; they will settle their little difficulty better without us.”

“It is useless,” Alice replied; “there is no difficulty, Mr. Redman, between your nephew and myself; but I have made my decision, and I wish you all to hear it.”

“After a little,” my uncle said, affably; “do not be rash, my dear young lady—talk awhile with Maurice.”

I heard him draw Mr. Morgan out of the room and close the door.

“Alice!” Maurice exclaimed, passionately.

She made no answer. I could fancy her standing there, pale and trembling, but determined still.

“Do you mean to drive me to despair, Alice? Have you no pity on me?”

“You have had none for me,” she replied; “none for my poor mother, who has been driven nearly mad during the past months.”

“But I love you,” he exclaimed, “I love you, Alice!”

There was an accent of truth in his words. I felt it wrong to listen longer, and would have stolen out of the room, but I remembered his violent temper, my promise to Alice, and remained.

“Do not say that,” she exclaimed; “do not dignify a selfish passion by that name! All this is useless, Mr. Redman—let me go away at once.”

“You have trifled with me, Alice; you have played the coquette as no true woman would have done.”

“I will not hear another word—it is false, Mr. Redman! I never gave you any encouragement from the first, and you know it. You have persecuted me beyond endurance; your uncle has worked on my father’s fears until he was ready to sacrifice his child. The plot is cleared up—you are powerless.”

“By heaven, I am not, and you shall learn it!”

“Threats, to a woman! Go on, sir, I cannot strike you! I know you to be a bad man, nothing that you can say or do will astonish me.”

“I have been a bad man,” he exclaimed, his voice changing to a low, pleading tone, “but you have changed my whole nature—you can make of me what you will. Only try, Alice, let this engagement go on—”

“There has been none, sir; I told you from the first that I did not consider myself in any way bound to you. I did not love you, so I said, and I repeat it now. Let me go away, Mr. Redman; all this is very painful, but you cannot change me.”

“At least I have had your father’s promise.”

“Wrung from him through fear—I know the whole. You cannot persecute me any longer! If I am not safe under his care I shall choose a guardian, as the terms of my aunt’s will give me a right to do. You can see that I have fully considered the matter; I will not submit to the treatment I have undergone, nor shall my mother be made wretched on my account.”

“You love some one else!” he exclaimed, as if a sudden light had broke upon him. “Some of those fools I saw round you last spring.”

“You have nothing to do with my feelings, Mr. Redman, and you are forgetting that you profess to be a gentleman, that you address a lady.”

“Let me discover who it is,” he continued, “and my vengeance shall be quick and certain.”

Alice did not even deign a reply. She opened the door and called to the two men who had been walking up and down the hall.

“Father,” she said, “Mr. Maurice Redman knows how useless it is to prolong this scene—for all our sakes let it end here.”

“I’ve nothing to do with it,” said Mr. Morgan, nervously, his pomposity quite subdued; “nothing at all.”

I heard my uncle say something to him in a threatening tone.

“Mr. Redman,” said Alice, calmly, “I did not hear what you said to my father—repeat it, if you please.”

“It was addressed only to him, my dear child,” he replied, gently.

“And was a threat—like those before it will be idle. I know the truth—you drew my father into some money transaction; he spent a portion of my property, to hide the affair he consented that I should marry your nephew. My father did not tell me this till he found that I was not ignorant of it. Oh! sir, neither you nor he knew Alice Morgan! I would give the last penny I had in the world to afford him a moment’s gratification.”

Mr. Morgan sniffed and moved about uneasily.

“My dear young lady,” said my uncle, “let us reserve this business until to-morrow.”

“Sir!” replied Alice, “it is ended—I leave your house at once.”

"She shall not!" muttered Maurice.

"Hush!" said my uncle, sternly; "you forget yourself. You will know how to excuse a lover's passion, Miss Morgan."

"I do not, sir! I have only to say that if you cannot furnish a carriage, my mother and I will walk."

"Oh! my dear young lady!"

"Mr. Redman, I have been badly treated, and I am indignant at the wrong."

"You have misunderstood——"

"Not in the least, sir—I understand only too well. Father, are you ready?"

"My dear," he said, not authoritatively, but with an attempt at fondness, "only consider."

"I have done so, sir, and I must go."

Maurice tried to expostulate, but my uncle checked him.

"Miss Morgan must have her way," he said; "she seems laboring under a strange delusion! We are not acting a play—young ladies are not made wives against their wills! But candor compels me to say, that until to-night I had supposed Miss Alice viewed the contemplated marriage with satisfaction—she should have expressed her real sentiments sooner—it does not become a woman to trifle."

"Nor have I," she said, indignantly.

"Oh! Miss Alice!" Maurice exclaimed.

"My dear," added her father, nervously; "you knew that even I——"

"Do not say it, father, you know I told you that I disliked that man. Mr. Redman, will you order a carriage, or must I walk?"

Maurice burst into a torrent of passionate reproaches: but she did not heed him.

I heard my uncle give a servant orders to bring round the carriage at once.

"Now, sir, farewell!" Alice said; "for your nephew I have no adieu—he is the best judge as to whether I have been well treated."

She left the room and went up stairs.

There was a low consultation between the three men.

"You must not blame me, Redman," Mr. Morgan said, "it was not my fault; how she knew of that affair I cannot say."

"Tell me, Morgan," said my uncle, "do you still wish this marriage to take place?"

"You know I do."

"Then let matters rest. Go away with them—be gentle to your wife, there is no other way of reaching Alice—and leave the rest to me."

"But, sir," Maurice began, angrily.

"Patience, patience!" said my uncle. "You can do nothing now."

At that moment the carriage drove round;

I left the library and went into the dining-room. When I heard them all in the hall, I returned thither. By the time I reached the outer door, my uncle was assisting Mrs. Morgan into the carriage with his accustomed suavity. The poor woman was weeping still, she had been so long a slave that she could not comprehend that her chains were broken.

I went up and bade them all farewell; the look I received from Alice repaid me for all my pain. Mr. Morgan scarcely spoke to me, he was so much irritated that it was necessary for him to vent his spite upon somebody.

Before any of us could collect our senses, the carriage drove away—Alice was gone.

My uncle led Maurice into his study without a word; Prudence joined me upon the verandah.

"Wal, if I ever!" she exclaimed. "What could have sent 'em off in this way, and there was a boiled fruit puddin' for dinner, just what Mr. Morgan asked to have?"

"We shall be obliged to eat it ourselves," I replied, laughing.

"And don't you know nothing what has happened?"

"Nothing more than you knew about the mad woman, my good Prudence."

"Oh! don't mention her, Paul! You'll frighten me to death as sure as the world."

She ran off into the dining-room; and in a few moments Maurice came out of the study livid with rage. I heard my uncle call after him, but he paid no attention.

"So you are here," he said, as he came toward me, with an oath.

"You seem irritated," I replied, quietly.

"Look out for yourself, that's all! Hang me, if I don't believe you've something to do with this business. Have you, say?"

He made a motion to strike me, but I warded off the blow.

"If you do that again," I said, "it will be the worse for you."

He uttered an oath and struck again. I dealt him a blow, in return, which sent him staggering against the wall.

He glared wildly at me, but did not offer to repeat his insult. An instant after, he dashed off toward the stables, and soon rode past on his black horse toward the gate.

"Who is that?" called my uncle, coming out into the hall.

"Maurice, sir—he is riding away."

My uncle rushed after him, shouting his name, but Maurice only flung a curse back and rode on.

My uncle returned to the verandah and listening to the gallop of Maurice's horse as he stood leaning against a pillar, taking no notice rode furiously away through the night. of me, or I of him, and there we both remained, (TO BE CONTINUED.)

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MY STEP-MOTHER'S BROTHER.

BY MARY E. CLARKE.

I WAS just sixteen when my father married for the second time, and never was seen a happier maiden than I was when the letter imparting the welcome news reached me. I had never known a mother's love or care, for my own mother died in giving me life. From one nurse I was handed to another till my seventh year, and then I was placed at a large boarding-school until my fifteenth birthday, when my father summoned me home and engaged masters to instruct me in languages and music. All through my lonely life I had longed with weary longing for a mother. I saw how every other love in my young companions' hearts faded before their love for their mother; in the visits I had made to the houses of my school-mates, I noticed how the hand and love of the mother brightened all things, promoted joy, and soothed sorrow. My father was kind and indulgent, but he was not used to children, and the love that would have been lavished upon him, was thrown back upon my heart by cold kisses, and inquiries which were kind, but seemed to me formal and exacted by duty.

My father had been absent upon a long journey, and he wrote to me to have the room my own mother had occupied, opened and aired to be in readiness for his new bride. Joyfully I obeyed. The dream of my life was coming true, the longing love was to have an object upon which to lavish its tenderness, I was to have a mother.

The happy day upon which I was to expect them came at last. They were to arrive in the city at five o'clock, and, as our house was a short distance out of town, I could not reasonably expect them before six. I had prepared the room for my mother, oh! how my tongue loved to speak the name. The snowy curtains were looped with dainty ribbons, the cool, white matting, and the pretty rosewood furniture were clean and glossy with the care we had given them. The table, mantle-piece, and bureau were decked with vases of fresh flowers, and the drawing-room, too, was filled with these fragrant offerings of my love. I had ordered the most tempting tea I could invent; my own fingers picked the rosy strawberries and piled them on the glass dish; and I had made, too,

dainty cakes, and decorated the dining-table with roses, woodbine, and starry jessamine.

With my own mother's portrait in my mind, I pictured my father's wife as having blue eyes, and soft, fair hair, banded down upon pale cheeks; and I donned my prettiest white dress, curled my hair with elaborate care, and looked long in the glass to see if my face and attire were calculated to meet with her approval. I had inherited from my mother only a fair complexion; and my nut brown hair and large hazel eyes were the copy of my father's. Glowing as my cheeks did with rude health, I was most unlike the portrait over the parlor mantle of my mother; but still I hoped that the resemblance to my father would make my face attractive to my new mother, and I took (a most unusual task with me) great pains to have my dress neat and elegant to please her eye.

At last the carriage, which I had sent into the city to meet the travelers, drove up to the door. I ran out to the porch. First my father got out, and then he handed out a tall lady in a gray dress and cloak; I saw at one glance that she had fair hair, pale cheeks, and blue eyes, and then dashing across the porch I sprang into her arms.

"Mother! darling mother, I am so glad you have come!" I cried, kissing her rapturously. A cold kiss fell upon my forehead, and a measured voice said quietly,

"That will do, child! Your daughter, I presume, Mr. Watson?"

"Yes, my only child, Charlotte, or generally called Lottie!"

I turned to welcome my father with a chill feeling at my heart, and then led the way into the house.

"Will you go to your room, mother?" I asked.

"Yes, but you will call me Mrs. Watson, Charlotte; I am scarcely old enough to mother such a big girl," and she laughed, and was joined in her merriment by my father.

Silently I led the way to the room I had taken such pains to arrange. Mrs. Watson took no notice of the room, or the lovely prospect from the windows, but removed her cloak and bonnet, smoothed her hair, and then turned to go down stairs again. At the door she paused,

"I wish you would direct the servants to throw away those flowers, they make a room most unhealthy to sleep in," and saying this, she went down stairs.

I emptied the vases which I had filled with such different feelings, and then I went again down stairs, not the happy, joyous girl I had been an hour before, but quiet, saddened, almost angry in my disappointment.

My dainty tea was discussed and enjoyed, but not one word was bestowed upon me. My father was entirely absorbed in the beauty and intelligence of his wife, who conversed brilliantly, but took no notice of me, and I sat at the table, as much forgotten and alone as if I were as entire a stranger to my father, as to my mother. After tea, unnoticed and unmissed, I crept to my own room, to weep over the shattered ruins of the air castles I had built so lately.

A new hope came in the morning. I thought how unreasonably I had been to expect my father's wife to love me at first sight, and I arose strong in the resolve to win her affection by every winning art at my command. It was very early, and I went down stairs to gather berries for breakfast, and to superintend the arrangement of the table. Strange as it may seem, I never thought that this was now my step-mother's duty; to me she was an honored guest, my father's love, my new mother, and my only wish was to make her new home attractive to her.

I was coming in from the garden, my hands holding a large china bowl of strawberries, when I saw Mrs. Watson standing in the doorway. As the sun fell upon her tall, graceful figure, I mentally approved of my father's taste in his selection of a wife. The fair hair which she had worn in wavy bands while traveling, now fell around her face in soft, natural curls, while the thick braids at the back of her head shone like burnished gold. Her delicate, pretty features, large blue eyes, and brilliant complexion were set off by a white morning dress, trimmed with dainty blue ribbons. She was really thirty-five years old, but would have been taken for twenty-three or four by almost every one.

Remembering my caution of the night before, I checked my bound forward, and greeted her quietly,

"I hope you rested well, Mrs. Watson."

Clear as a silver bell, and cold, and hard, her voice fell upon my ear,

"Will you have the kindness to give me the keys, show me the closets, and tell me the names of your servants?"

"Are you not tired with your journey?" I said. "Let me relieve you of the worry of housekeeping until you are more accustomed to the place."

"I never worry about anything, Miss Watson, and I prefer to be mistress in my own house."

Choking back the indignation which filled my heart at the willful misunderstanding of the offer I intended in kindness, I said with forced calmness,

"It is your right, madam, and I never intended to dispute it. Here are the keys!" Then raising my voice I called "Lizzie."

The little waiting maid came at the call.

"Show Mrs. Watson," I continued, "the closets these keys open; and, in future, you, and the other servants are to go to her for orders," and, having thus complied with her request, I bowed to Mrs. Watson, and went up to my own room, leaving the strawberries upon the hall table.

My former lonely life had been Paradise to what followed my father's marriage. Beautiful, superficially accomplished, and poor, Mrs. Watson had married my father because he was wealthy, and she filled her new station with a dignity that pleased his fastidious and reserved nature. But my step-mother lacked one gift: she seemed to have no heart. She was never unkind to me, but she raised between us an icy wall which I could not pass. All the warm, ardent love of an enthusiastic heart, which she could have won by a few caresses and answering affection, she passed by coldly and neglectful. We were as far apart, my parents and myself, as the most utter strangers could have been. Chilled, lonely, aching with unsatisfied longings for love, I threw the whole strength of my nature into my studies and out-door pursuits.

I divided my day into hours for music, drawing, languages, and exercise, trying thus to satisfy the cravings of my nature; and when these became too strong for sedentary pursuits, I mounted my own horse, my beautiful Mendan, and, unattended, scoured the country for miles around.

Into this strange, lonely life I was suffered to fall, unheeded, unchecked by either of my parents; and as all my timidly offered love (for it came to this at last) was scorned and slighted by Mrs. Watson, I grew at last to hate her with all the force of an ardent nature, whose affection turns from its own sweet channel into bitter contempt and dislike.

A whole year had passed away, when my step-mother informed my father that her brother

had just returned from Europe, and asked permission to invite him to spend the summer months with us. The permission was, of course, instantly accorded, and the invitation sent. A year before, I should have decked our guest's room with flowers, placed books there, and outdressed my brains for dainty dishes to place before him. Now I heard the tidings with indifference: but my step-mother turned that passive feeling to one of perfect disgust and hatred. She was seated with my father on the porch, when, passing through the parlor, I heard her say,

"I am in hopes that George will offer himself to Charlotte. He must now settle down, and if he marries, must marry money; and as the fortune Charlotte's mother left her will prove her only attraction in society, we may as well save her from a mere fortune-hunter."

"Her *only* attraction, Delia?" I heard my father say. "I think the child would be pretty, if she would take pains with her dress."

"But she won't; she is a mere sullen, stupid bookworm."

I cannot describe the tide of bitter, sickening emotions that swept over my soul as I left the parlor. I was *rich*, and for this crime I was to be tied to my step-mother's brother for life. Child as I was, I had never dreamed, as young girls often dream, of marriage; I had no *beau-ideal* to rise up and contrast with my newly acquired hatred; but I thought of my step-mother's hard, cold blue eyes, and calm, cutting tones; and I fancied being the wife of a man with similar attributes, and with a strong, bitter resolve I said in my heart that it should never be, not if I died defending my position.

Many things detained the newly arrived traveler in New York, and he could not tell his sister positively when he would come to our house, but he accepted her invitation, and, having put his room in readiness, we waited for him, not expecting to see him at any stated time.

It was a pleasant day in June, and my parents had gone into the city to spend the day and night, and I was alone, excepting the servants, in the house. I had taken a long ride early in the afternoon, and, coming home tired and heated, I took a bath, and then went to my own room to lie down; but refreshed already, I lingered there in my large, easy-chair, not sleepy enough to fulfill my first intention. Lounging thus lazily, my step-mother's words came into my mind.

"A sullen, stupid bookworm, with no attraction but money."

I stood up before my long mirror to verify or

falsify the statement. It was not vanity that prompted me, it was only a fierce, wicked desire to prove her words false.

I let down the profusion of brown hair, which I had worn so long in a plain roll at the back of my head, and twisted it into the soft, full curls nature had intended them to form. Then turning away from the plain dresses I had worn so long, I took from a drawer a soft, white muslin, cut to leave my shoulders and arms bare, and which fell in fleecy, full folds from the waist to the feet. It was a simple costume, but I marked, with a bitter triumph, how well it suited me; the arm and neck the dress left uncovered were round and white; the soft curls were glossy and rich in color; and the glow of daily exercise upon my cheek contrasted well with a fair, broad forehead. The large, hazel eyes were haughty in their glance as my step-mother's blue ones; and a smile of pride swept over my lip as I gazed at the reflection in the glass. Then I sighed. What were riches or beauty to me! they won for me not one word or look of love: and so, saddened again, I turned listlessly from the room and went to the parlor. The grand piano stood open, and I sat down before it—I played, I scarcely knew how, for hours of lonely practice had made the keys a loved, accustomed resting-place for my fingers, and they fell into sad melodies, and wailing modulations almost of themselves. One familiar air after another stole sadly and plaintively out, and the bitterness in my heart was melting before the loved notes, when a shadow fell across the piano. I started. A tall man, with black hair, sunburned face, and a frank, bright expression, was standing in the long window, one foot on the sill, one on the porch.

"Ah!" said he, in a pleasant, cheerful voice, "I am sorry I interrupted you. I have been listening for a long time. Now," and he came to my side, "play me something more suited to the fingers of one so young and fair, than the sad strains you have been indulging in."

I never asked him who he was, for my father's friends often spent the long afternoons upon our cool, shady porch; but I yielded to the charm of a cheerful tone, and, bowing my head, complied with his request.

"Thank you!" he said, as the last notes of a bold march died away. "Now sing!"

"I cannot sing."

"No! You look as if you could."

I started as I found my old, merry laugh breaking from me.

"But I can't! I have not one song in my whole collection of music."

"But you sing as you go about the house?" he said, inquiringly.

"I did once, not now," I said, mournfully.

"Why not?"

"I have no heart to sing!"

"You are wrong there. Young people should encourage every cheerful feeling. Why, I could sing here for very joy to see the sun shine, and the trees waving. Look out here," and he led the way to the porch, "see how the sunset gilds every tree and flower, and mark those varying clouds." Then his tone grew more solemn as he said, "God is very good to us!"

I bowed my head, and hot, scalding tears chased each other down my face. The wicked ingratitude of my heart for the comforts and blessings granted to me, rose in all its black sinfulness before that simple sentence.

The stranger seemed surprised at my emotion, but did not speak. He went with a light, free step into the garden, and when I grew quiet again he came to me, with a small bunch of half opened moss rose-buds in his hands.

"Will you let these be my peace offering?" he said, gently. "I wounded you: but, believe me, it was in ignorance."

I pinned the pretty bouquet to the bosom of my dress, and then said,

"This is not our choicest collection of flowers. I will show you *my* garden," and I led the way to the little piece of ground which it had been my greatest recreation to cultivate.

We chatted gayly as we went from flower to flower; and then I took my guest to a tiny waterfall, some few steps from my father's grounds, and, as the darkness fell, led him again to the house.

"You will take tea with me?" I said. "My father and mother are out."

"So the servant told me."

"But I should be pleased to fill their place, if you will walk in."

"Walk in!" and my guest broke into merry laughter. "Why, I have come to stay a month or two!" You don't know me? Excuse the omission; I really forgot to introduce myself. I am George Lawson—your uncle George, Miss Lottie."

I froze instantly. Heaven forgive my unjust suspicions, but I fancied he was already trying to win the *heirress*.

Stately and dignified I sat at the table, but I could not keep up the reserve. Anecdotes of travel, witty stories of foreign life, and, above all, a frank, genial manner, melted away the cold manner I tried to preserve, and long before we left the tea-table I found myself telling

adventures of my lonely horseback excursions, and laughing merrily with my guest. Such an evening as that had never brightened my life before. My uncle, for he merrily insisted upon my calling him so, defended his argument about singing, by giving me several songs in a rich baritone voice; and I found my own uncultivated notes mingling with his, as long-forgotten airs fell upon my ear. We sat on the porch after the moon rose, and we argued over our favored authors, and quoted poetry with half-laughing, half-serious emphasis. When at last I bade him good night, I forgot the hateful barrier I had resolved to place between us, and I hummed a merry tune, as I went with a light step to my own room.

My uncle's merry laugh rang in my ears, as I got ready for the night; but, after I blew out my light, and stood in the moonlight, looking from my window, the current of my thoughts changed. In my new joy I did what in my sorrow I had neglected. I knelt down and prayed, humbly and sincerely, with gratitude and fervor, and I lay down to sleep, calm and hopeful. A happy morning succeeded the evening I had spent so pleasantly. We rode out in the early day, and returned to a hearty dinner at noon, and, after that was over, paced up and down the cool parlors, talking of scenes I had read about and longed to see, and of all the pretty sights we had seen on our ride. I had donned the white dress again, and fresh rose-buds lay on my breast, for my life seemed opening with new light, and I instinctively tried to show my joy in my dress.

At two o'clock my parents returned. I did not heed my step-mother's sneer as she said a few cold words about my improved appearance, but I slipped away and left them, sure that, with his sister's beautiful face, and the many reminiscences they must have to recall, my newly found friend would not miss me.

I was wrong. The first question at tea-time was, "Where have you been all the afternoon?"

"Oh!" said my step-mother, "Charlotte never appears excepting at meal-times. She aspires to be a professor in petticoats, and studies, *she says*, all day."

They were coming back, those bitter feelings, but I had been poring over a new study that afternoon—my own mother's Bible, and I was sickened at the wicked pride and resentment revealed in my own heart, so I stifled back the reviving bitterness, and said, gently,

"I thought Mrs. Watson would wish to have her brother to herself, after so long an absence."

"Mrs. Watson!" cried the said brother. "Why, Delia, don't this young lady bestow any more loving title upon you than that?"

"It is not my wish to be called mother by Charlotte," said his sister, coldly.

"No! Now I feel intensely dignified when she calls me uncle George. I like it, and yet I am ten years younger than you are."

"We will not discuss that point, if you please," was the cold reply.

The days and weeks glided away, and I loved my step-mother's brother. All the warm affection which had been chilled and smothered for so long sprang into new life under his genial manner. The frank, honest devotion and true religious feeling, that was the under current of

his every word and action, warmed my long slumbering love to my Maker into active life. The Sunday service, which it had been a mere matter of duty to me to attend, became heart worship, as his full, manly tones spoke the responses or sang the hymns at my side; and when he came to me, and with his dear, pleasant smile and cheery voice wooed me for his wife, I knew he loved me; and I felt sure, as I do now, that had I been poor, as was his own sister when my father wooed her, he would still have given me the love of his brave, warm heart.

In our own home, far away from the chilling reserve that so nearly made a bitter misanthropist of me, I live a happy, grateful life with my step-mother's brother.

OUR NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR.

BY MARY GRAHAM.

"Well, Annie," said my husband to me, one day, as he came in from visiting some patients, "the next house is rented at last; so your wish to have a next door neighbor is gratified."

"Oh! delightful," I exclaimed. "Who is it? Have you seen them? How large is the family?"

"The name is Norris. I have not seen them. The family consists of a widow, a son, two daughters, and two servants," he answered, gravely.

I smiled very laconic. "And now how did you find all this out?"

"Oh! knowing that I had a wife at home who is a bit of a gossip, I took pains to inquire."

"For shame, Harry; but I will find out all you know, at least, so that you may not have your trouble for nothing."

"I know only one thing more, and that is, they will move in to-morrow."

To-morrow came, and brought the expected family, but I could not, of course, find out anything about them for awhile, I thought.

"I will not call till they have had time to get settled," I said to Harry, "but as they are moving, we might offer our assistance, as people are not very ceremonious in this little village."

Harry smiled. "You would like to know now what they have in their house, wouldn't you?"

I was indignant. But before I could give him a reply he deserved, our housemaid, who, Harry said, had her mistress' passion for becoming acquainted with strangers, ushered into the dining-room a servant, whom she announced as belonging to the new comers.

"Missus sent me to ax you for some dinner," she said, staring round the room with mouth wide open. "She says she bin' in sich a hurry she hain't had time to cook nothin'."

I filled several plates, and put a loaf of bread on a waiter—fortunately Sally had baked that morning—and we had had a ham boiled.

Harry looked at me quizzically when the girl had gone out, and his eyes twinkled as he said, "A pretty good beginning!"

Harry will tease sometimes, though he is the best creature in the world.

For the next three days it rained incessantly, and we heard nothing more from our new neighbors, but after that I went to see them. I was shown into a parlor so crowded with furniture, that it was with difficulty I made my way to a sofa.

There was a handsome rosewood piano, two small sofas, six large mahogany chairs, two large rocking-chairs and one small one, two ottomans, a mahogany centre-table, an *etagere* filled with curiosities, and four small card tables. They are wealthy, thought I.

About two weeks after this, one morning, before I had risen, our neighbor's servant came to borrow some coffee. I told Jane to give her the raw coffee. In ten minutes she returned, saying that her mistress wanted the parched coffee. I gave it rather unwillingly, as I was always exceedingly particular about the roasting, that every grain should be of a beautiful brown, and I feared that sent back would be unfit to drink.

In the course of the day, Mrs. Norris sent to borrow sugar, lard, and my scales to weigh butter. I found out that she sold butter, and my scales were in requisition twice a week.

"I don't think they can be rich," said Harry, and he was confirmed in his opinion a few days after, when he was called in to attend one of the young ladies. The furniture of the bedrooms was of the plainest description. Everything was sacrificed to show, and there were no comforts. The parlor was elegantly furnished, and the kitchen almost empty.

Things went on smoothly, however, till one morning when I had made a cake, and put it

in the oven, thinking I would have it baked by dinner time and served for dessert, I was about to leave it to the cook, when the yellow skirt of our neighbor's servant appeared in the doorway.

"Missus says she is gwine to have comp'ny, and wants you to lend her your oven."

"Tell her," I answered, "that I am using it to bake a cake." I was really glad to have an excuse to refuse it, for I was beginning to be tired of this constant borrowing.

But I was not to escape so easily. In a few minutes my tormentor returned.

"Missus says can't you take the cake out and let her have the oven? She will sen' it right back soon as she done wid it."

I was fairly exasperated. "Tell her I can, but I won't," I answered, shortly, the blood mounting to my face.

The girl hastily retreated, and, on looking round, I saw Harry standing in the door, laughing with all his might.

"You would be provoked too," said I, "if you were tormented so. Day before yesterday she borrowed my scales, and my wafer irons, and she has them yet; then she borrowed oil, lard, and yesterday tea, and my lamp. Now she wants the oven. It is enough to provoke a saint."

"And my little wife does not pretend to be a saint," he said, catching me up in his arms. "Hurrah! little woman, I did not know you had so much spirit."

The next morning, our little Ella was cross at the table, and I did not at first notice Harry, but when I did, I saw him making such grimaces over his coffee, that I put down my knife and fork to see what was the matter. When he saw that I observed him, he gave me a queer look, and said, "What is the matter with this coffee?" True enough, it was horrible.

The cook was called in and interrogated. She was the best cook in the village, and was terribly mortified when I found fault.

"Well, Sally," said Harry, "is this coffee? I never tasted anything like it in my life."

"It is some coffee that Mrs. Norris sent back, sir, and I thought you didn't want to waste it. I have kept it for three days."

"Well, Annie, give her coffee next time. Don't lend it if we are to get back such a mixture as this."

He was in haste to visit a patient, so I could not have any more made; but I had some ready when he came to dinner, which he praised sufficiently to pacify Sally. That day a man brought our weekly supply of butter. I left my sewing

to weigh it, when, to my vexation, the scales were not to be found.

"Go over to Mrs. Norris, Jane, and ask her to please to lend me my scales for a few minutes."

This caused a slight rupture for a few days, and I thought our neighbor would give me up, for, as Jane expressed it, she was mightily put down by what I said. Harry, however, doubted. His wife's temper was becoming so irritable, that he forbore to tease her as formerly, but he could not help laughing when I told him about the scales.

Two weeks passed, and Mrs. Norris seemed to have forgotten the matter, for she paid me frequent visits, and borrowed more and more.

One night the supper-table was laid, and we sat by the grate, in which the glowing coals made the room so comfortable that we could not bear to leave it. I was in a good-humor, and had my little Ella on my lap, when a rap was heard at the door, which I knew so well that my indignation rose instantly.

"Why, Annie, what is the matter?" cried my husband.

"Matter enough!" I answered, shortly. "There is Mrs. Norris' servant again, perhaps she wants to borrow Ella this time."

"Me, mamma," cried the child, running toward me. "I won't go to her."

"I will see what she wants, Annie," said my husband, going into the next room where the servant was waiting.

She wanted our dining-table. Mrs. Norris had just heard that she was to have a surprise party, and she wished to make some preparations.

"You cannot have it," answered my husband, "we have not been to tea."

"Oh! she told me, if you was at supper, to wait till you got through: I will go into the kitchen and you can call me."

"Tell your mistress that she cannot have it this evening," said Harry.

"She told me to ax for the lamp too."

"Tell her we are using that also," said he, shutting the door and going back to the fire.

"Annie," said he, "I am not very busy just now. We will go into the country for a few weeks and see your sister. We can then arrange what is best to be done, for I cannot live in this way. You are not the same person you used to be. I will not see you fretted so."

We went into the country, and the house was locked up for a month. Harry took the opportunity to go North, and see a brother who was in failing health.

At last we returned, and, to our astonishment, we found our neighbors gone.

Our kitchen, however, had to be refurnished. Mrs. Norris had gone to a lady with whom I had left the key, and said that I had promised her the use of several things during my absence.

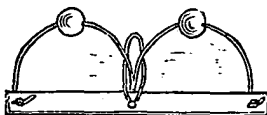
The oven was gone, and my scales, two cake-pans that I especially valued, and my wafer irons.

“I think, Annie,” said my husband, “that I will buy the next house, so that we may in future be careful whom we have for neighbors.”

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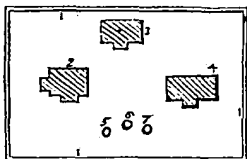
PARLOR PASTIMES.

THE STRING AND BALLS.—Get an oblong strip of wood or ivory, and bore three holes in it, as shown in the cut. Then take a piece of twine, passing the two ends through the holes at the extremities, fastening them with a knot, and



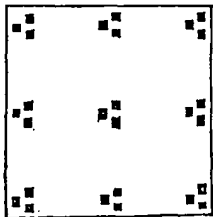
thread upon it two beads or rings, as depicted above. The puzzle is to get both beads on the same side, without removing the string from the holes, or untying the knots.

THE FOUNTAINS.—1 is a wall, 2, 3, 4, three houses, and 5, 6, 7, three fountains or canals. It is required to bring the



water from 5 to 4, from 7 to 2, and from 6 to 3, without once crossing the other, or passing outside of the wall 1.

THE NUNS. Twenty-four nuns were arranged in a convent by night by a sister, to count nine each way, as in the diagram. Four of them went out for a walk by moonlight. How were the remainder placed in the square so as still to count nine each way? The four who went out returned,



bringing with them four friends; how were they all placed still to count nine each way, and thus to deceive the sister as to whether there were twenty, twenty-four, twenty-eight, or thirty-two in the square?

CARL MAINWARING'S PRIDE.

BY CLARA AUGUSTA.

CHAPTER I.

A GROUP of beautiful girls stood on the piazza of the academy at Whitestown. It was examination day, and the dread ordeal had been passed with credit to all concerned. The term had been one of improvement, happiness, and undisturbed harmony, and its close was marked by tears upon many a fair cheek.

Many of the young ladies were graduates; and most of the young gentlemen had finished their preparatory studies, and were ready to enter college. So you may well believe that this fourteenth of November, of which we write, was a sad day to the students of Whitestown Academy; for their pleasant association was to be broken; and their words of farewell—one to another—were to be uttered.

A little aside from the aforementioned group, a young girl—the loveliest of them all—leaned against the centre pillar of the portico, and looked on her late companion with calm, tearless eyes. Gay, careless, and beautiful—why should Annabel Meriton—the sole heiress of a man who counted his wealth by the hundred thousand dollars—why should she weep at parting with those who could henceforth be nothing to her?

On the dark glossiness of Miss Meriton's hair rested the light wreath of laurel, placed there by the hand of Gov. Marshall, the chairman of the Examining Committee: and from a richly-chased chain around her white neck, hung the golden medal bestowed upon her for the best *theme*, read aloud in the Exhibition Hall. The heavy dress of royal purple well became the superb figure which it shrouded; and the fall of costly lace from her arms and neck but half concealed the spray of diamonds glittering on her bosom.

Annabel was the only child of a retired merchant, whose fine old mansion reared its imposing front in one of the Boston suburban villages—and from the fond father's indulgence Annabel had been, in some considerable degree, *spoiled*. But no doting neglect of restraint could ruin the noble heart, and generous sympathies of Miss Meriton; though these better qualities might remain imbedded, for years, in the cold pride which formed a part of her nature.

At this time she was eighteen; tall, and exquisitely modeled, with a clear, brunette expression, perfect features, and hair and eyes dark as the wing of a raven.

One by one, the friends of Miss Meriton approached her, to say adieu. She had a gay smile and a pleasant word for each; and in a brief space of time all had taken leave and moved away, save one. Carl Mainwaring still kept his place at the western window of the hall but a few yards from the lady; though, it would seem, totally forgetful of her presence. He was gazing out on the sunset sky, his hat in his hand, and his brow bared to the north wind. Mr. Mainwaring was familiarly known among the students, as "the janitor;" in other words, he made the fires, swept the rooms, and kept the keys of the building, in return for which duties he received his tuition. He was, like many another, poor, proud, and aspiring; and shrank from no toil, however lowly, that would procure for him the learning which he coveted.

Carl was not handsome, in the usual acceptance of the term, but there was a look of power in his calm, gray eyes worth a thousand gifts of beauty. His broad, thoughtful brow, and the sweep of his soft, dark hair, redeemed his somewhat irregular features from absolute plainness; and the haughty curve of his lip had something in its firm compression that said its owner was not one to beg the favor of any man.

Miss Meriton stood quiet a moment, her eyes furtively resting on the motionless figure of the young man, as if expecting him to come to her as the others had one; but not by look, or gesture, did he show himself aware of her propinquity. She hesitated; then advanced to his side and spoke his name.

"Mr. Mainwaring!"

He started at the sound of her voice, and turned toward her.

"Well, Miss Meriton?"

"Are you not going to bid me good-by, sir? Have you forgotten that this is our last day at Whitestown?"

Those strangely expressive eyes of his were fixed upon her. He studied her beautiful face for some time before he spoke. The scrutiny

seemed to satisfy him of something which he had been half-assured of before, for he drew himself up haughtily, as he said,

"Yes, I am well aware of the fact you have just stated. I am ready to bid you good-by, Miss Meriton; and if my good wishes are anything you have them."

His cold fingers lightly touched hers, so hot and burning; he bowed slightly, and his pale face grew a little more death-like. That gray, ashen pallor might have been caused by the sudden going out of the vivid crimson in the western sky; but the forced immobility of his features seemed to contradict the suspicion. Miss Meriton did not lift her eyes, but her voice took a mocking intonation, as she responded,

"Good-by, and many thanks for your kindness! Good-by, Mr. Mainwaring!"

She moved away; he went eagerly forward, as though he would have called her back; but if the word was formed in his heart it found no utterance from his lips. She went down the long flight of steps into the graveled avenue, stepped into the splendid carriage, which had been more than an hour in waiting, and was borne rapidly away.

And Mr. Mainwaring watched the glittering equipage until a turn in the road hid it from his view; then, with a firm, determined step, he left the academy and hurried down to his lodging. He was to return home on the following day, and no time must be lost in reveries; he needed all for preparation.

CHAPTER II.

ANNABEL MERITON was in her own stately home once more. Early in the new year, Mr. Meriton's parlors were thrown open for a grand ball, and on this occasion the beautiful heiress was presented to society. From this night she took her place in the high circle in which she moved—the acknowledged queen. None disputed her right to the palm of society; and fair women envied her these royal charms which won so many men to lay their fortunes at her feet. If flattery and admiration create happiness, Annabel Meriton should have been happy; for, turn whithersoever she would, her praise flowed from every tongue. Wealth and talent bowed before her, asking but hope; she turned away from all. She was in no hurry to leave her father, she said; she loved her old home too well to care for an "establishment" for some time to come. And Mr. Meriton, idolizing his daughter, did not urge the matter upon her;

so the season closed, summer at length passed, the second winter came and went, and still Annabel was unengaged.

This second summer drew on bright and beautiful. Annabel was importuned to join a gay party for Newport, but she declined; and again her aunt Ethel, a childless, wealthy widow, besought the favor of her company at Nahant. No; Annabel disliked crowded watering-places; she had not yet decided whither she should turn her feet—would her friends please let her alone? And finding her disinclined to receive the homage of the *haut ton*, for that season, the fashionables of Leedsbury departed for their several *ressorts* without the reigning belle.

Toward the close of June, a letter came to Miss Meriton from Grace Welford, her blood cousin, who resided in a quiet New Hampshire village; and this letter contained an urgent invitation to Annabel to come up and spend the warm months at Meadow Farm.

For some inexplicable reason the invitation met with Miss Meriton's approval. She had not seen her uncle and aunt Welford for some years; she remembered Meadow Farm as a rural retreat of great beauty; and her cousin, Grace, as a sweet, blue-eyed lassie, full of health and spirits. She laid the letter before her father, pleading her cause with imposing earnestness, and of course Mr. Meriton had only to assent.

So to Meadow Farm went the willful heiress, and a warm welcome did she meet from her honest relations. The Welfords were not rich, but in comfortable circumstances; and every necessary and many of the luxuries of life surrounded them.

Annabel went, with the family, to the humble little village church on the Sabbath; and when the clergyman arose, and in a deep, sonorous voice read the morning service, the heart of the proud beauty trembled, and beat quicker, for she recognized Carl Mainwaring.

His discourse did not disappoint *one* of his auditors, at least, though she listened to him for the first time; for Annabel Meriton had always felt assured that his cold exterior was but the flimsy covering of latent fire, which only wanted occasion to break forth and burn with fervid intensity. Once, and once only, during the sermon, the full, expressive glitter of the young clergyman's eyes swept the face of Miss Meriton; and Grace started, as she saw the tide of crimson which swelled up to the very forehead of her cousin.

That evening Miss Meriton made some casual inquiries of her aunt concerning Mr. Main-

waring. Mrs. Welford spoke warmly in his praise. He was poor in this world's goods, she said; but his deep, fervent piety, his Christian benevolence, his enthusiastic love of the good and beautiful, his feeling sympathy with the afflicted more than compensated for his lack of gold. He resided in the little brown parsonage behind the church with his mother and younger brother—a lad much given to study, and a cripple from his youth. Carl, she said, toiled early and late, when his pastoral duties were over, for the sake of procuring the wherewithal to purchase for this unfortunate brother the books which he coveted. His salary was but meagre, his necessary expenses large, but he never turned a beggar away empty-handed or refused a meal to a hungry fellow creature.

Annabel heard her to the end, and acquiesced in the admiring old lady's declaration that Mr. Mainwaring was "one of a thousand," but said nothing. What was the pastor of Meadow Farm to her that she should listen to his praises?

Mr. Mainwaring called at the house of Mr. Welford, and Miss Meriton would, perhaps, have met him as an old acquaintance, but the cold courtesy of his manner changed her purpose. If he was snow, she was ice; and throughout the whole evening not a half dozen remarks passed between the two.

The pastor visited his parishioners with punctual regularity, and consequently he came often to Meadow Farm. But there arose no friendship, no sociality between him and Miss Meriton, much to good Mrs. Welford's chagrin, who could but illy bear to see her beloved minister "put down," as she expressed it, even by niece Annabel.

Janvrin Mainwaring, the young cripple, was made happy during the summer by the reception of several bundles of elegantly-bound books just suited to his peculiar taste; and these handsome presents came from an unknown source. There was much speculation in the village on this point—all to no purpose, however—and Janvrin was forced to be grateful only to Providence. Once, when Carl had alluded to the mysterious gifts, in Annabel's presence, he had said,

"I know nothing of the generous donor; but whoever or whatever he may be, he has my warmest gratitude."

And why did Miss Meriton's cheek flush so hotly? Why did the white fingers, holding the dainty embroidery, tremble, and let the rich silks fall to the floor? What was Carl Mainwaring's gratitude to her?

July fled, August came and departed, Sep-

tember trained her mantle of dusky gold over the hills. The first frosts fell, the maples glowed like bleeding hearts, and the stately elms clad themselves in garments of flaming amber.

Much as she loved this glorious autumn in the country, Annabel Meriton could stay amid its charms no longer. Her father was impatient for her society, and guests were momentarily expected at Meriton Hall.

But she must have one more walk, all to herself, by the shores of the calm-bosomed Cochecho; not even Grace should share the ramble; and so, tying on her hat, and throwing a light shawl on her shoulders, Annabel set forth.

It was one of those days belonging to no month of the year but ripe and perfect September! that golden barrier between the light and joy of summer, and the darkness and gloom of winter! The shadows lay purple on the long range of western hills, and the mellow haze, dreamy and blue, like the air, cast an exquisite mirage over the distant peak of Mt. Kearsarge.

Imbued with the soft, quiet loveliness of all around, Annabel wandered down the banks of the river until she came to a sort of grotto, curving into its background of granite stone. It was cool and fragrant here; the green moss clung closely to the rock, and the feathery gracefulness of the verdant brake hid the gaping crevices in the precipice which might give shelter to some venomous reptile. Annabel flung herself down on the yielding turf, and with her head in hand listened to the lulling murmur of the water over the pebbles in its bed.

She sat there a long time, unmindful of the lapse of hours, remembering only that on the morrow she was to go back to the noise and excitement of fashionable life.

A slight, rustling sound around her. She glanced up quickly, and remained transfixed with horror. Not two yards from her seat—blocking up the only egress of the grotto, his head erect, his fearful fangs whitely glistening, coiled for a spring, was a huge rattlesnake. Again, that ominous rustling—that frightful rattle—broke on her ears. Flight was impossible. She felt that her fate was sealed. But she did not start up, or cry out. Her faculties were paralyzed, and she sat quiet, gazing with inevitable fascination on the terrible enemy. There was a slight quivering of the reptile's body—he was gathering his forces for the fatal bound; but still she sat, her eyes glazed to his, so fiercely glittering, waiting for the blow.

The sharp crack of a rifle rang through the

wood; the snake sprang wildly upward, and fell down, collapsed and bleeding, upon the very folds of Annabel's shawl.

She darted aside from the dreaded contact, and beheld, in the path before her, Mr. Mainwaring. He carried a rifle in his hand; and his greeting, though cold, partook of anxiety.

"Are you injured, Miss Meriton?"

"No; thanks to your prompt action, I am safe," she replied, frankly, extending her hand.

"At least you will not refuse my gratitude?"

He grasped the offered hand with vehemence, but dropped it again almost instantly.

"I deserve no honor. Your life was in danger from the serpent, but I put it in double jeopardy by the shot which rendered the first peril harmless. If you had moved a yard to the right, Miss Meriton, I should have been your murderer."

"But I did not stir, and therefore you still have a claim upon me. I am glad to owe my life to you, above all others!"

The concluding words were spoken in a low whisper, more to herself than to her companion. But his quick ear caught their import, and for an instant a radiant smile lighted up his pale face. He stooped down over the dead snake and severed the rattles from its carcase. Twining a crimson leaf around them, he held the *outré* offering toward Annabel.

"Take them," he said; "and if you feel grateful to me for preserving you from their former proprietor, keep them as a remembrancer."

She did not know whether he was in earnest or no, but she accepted the strange gift, and the donor walked on silently beside her until they reached the place where their paths separated. Mr. Mainwaring stopped, and said,

"Once more, Miss Meriton, I have the honor to bid you good-by. Our paths diverge; it is not probable that they will again intersect. Long ago I gave you my good wishes when we parted; now I say God bless you!"

His voice was deeply passionate; it thrilled to the lower depth of that proud woman's being; but when she would have spoken her own farewell, he had left her side, and was far down the valley.

CHAPTER III.

ANNABEL returned home, and once more she was the belle of society. But her indifference toward her legion of suitors stigmatized her a coquette and a heartless trifler, though neither title was deserved, for she sought no admiration, and encouraged none to love her.

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At the close of December, Mr. Mainwaring, in his quiet little parsonage, was surprised by the receipt of a very urgent invitation from the Bradford street church, at Leedsbury, to resign his present charge and assume the pastoral care of that association. This proposal was attended by many advantages. It would secure to him the convenience of a near residence to Boston, where his love of the beautiful in art could be satisfied; and the liberal salary offered would enable him to educate his brother, and surround his mother with many of the luxuries of life.

Affection and inclination bound him to the dear people of Meadow Farm; but his duty to his helpless relatives impelled him to the new office. And the first Sabbath of the new year he stood in the desk before the aristocratic audience of the Bradford street church, and delivered to them his first discourse.

Happy and at ease in his handsome home, with his mother and brother blessing him for the sacrifice he had made of his affection for their sakes, he little thought that to Annabel Meriton he owed his stroke of good fortune, rather than to the fame of his talent or eloquence. He did not know that her influence with the Bradford street congregation had secured to him the place so lately made vacant by the death of a well-beloved pastor.

Mr. Mainwaring was thrown into Annabel's society very frequently, but nothing like familiarity ever rose up between them. They seemed to naturally repel each other. Envious rival belles said that Mr. Mainwaring despised the beautiful girl for her frivolity and gayety, as well as for her total disregard of all respect for religion. But, be this as it might, Annabel's conversation took no serious tone in the pastor's presence; her laugh was free and careless when he was by, as when he was away; and his grave face never relaxed into a smile when she uttered in his hearing those sparkling, witty *bon mots* for which she had long been distinguished. It was plainly evident that the imperial beauty of Annabel Meriton exerted no influence over the heart of the clergyman of Leedsbury.

Mr. Mainwaring's people learned, in a short time, to both love and fear the new incumbent. His eloquence was fiery and scorching; no sin, however hidden it might have been, escaped his malediction; every secret crime, known or unknown, he denounced without hesitation. He spared none. He extolled God's goodness and mercy continually; and besought all, as they hoped to gain heaven at last, to fulfill the will of that God in spirit and in truth.

He stood up in the pulpit before that listening congregation, and anathematized those who in brodered robes and haughty pride, follow forever the phantoms of pleasure and folly; and he did not know that in his own heart he harbored a pride stronger, and more indomitable, than the earthquake which heaves up a mountain, or ruins a city!

CHAPTER IV.

A STARTLING rumor pervaded Leedsbury. Mr. Meriton, the wealthy and aristocratic Mr. Meriton, was reduced to poverty! A fleet of ships, in which all his capital had been invested, with their valuable East Indian cargoes, had been wrecked on the Spanish coast; and everything was lost. Nothing now remained to the quondam millionaire, save Meriton Hall and its grounds. His stately daughter—the beautiful and admired Annabel—was no longer the worshiped heiress; but the poor girl who might yet be compelled to earn her daily bread by the labor of her hands! It was a great change, but Mr. Meriton bore up manfully, and Annabel proved herself a true heroine. She sold all her jewels, and gave the proceeds to her father that all his honest debts might be paid, and no man suffer by their misfortune.

They rented a part of their large house, dismissed all the servants but two, and sold the carriage and horses.

It is said that misfortunes never come singly; and certainly this saying was made a truism in the case of the Meritons. One night in March—a wild, windy, blustering night—Meriton Hall took fire, and burned to the ground! But this loss of property was nothing compared with the other great affliction which it occasioned.

Annabel was sleeping in her chamber on the second floor when the fire broke out, but the roar of the flames aroused her, and, hastily dressing herself, she hurried down the trembling staircase. Half way to the bottom, she remembered that Sallie, the maid servant, occupied the room above hers, and might not yet have awakened. Obeying the impulse of her heart, she flew back the way she had come, dragged the frightened girl from her bed, and led her out into the corridor. The dense smoke was almost stifling, but Annabel was no craven, and, alternately coaxing and threatening, she drew her companion down the stairway. The lower hall was reached—it was filled with fiery billows of flame—but there was no time for hesitation. One determined dash, and Annabel stood, with her charge, without the tottering

walls—but alas! for the brave woman, whose beauty had so long been the theme of every tongue!

Annabel's hair, that magnificent hair, which had elicited so much admiration, was burned entirely off; leaving the head bare; her face was charred and blackened, and her hands hung useless and bleeding at her side. She was taken to a neighboring dwelling, accompanied by her agonized father, and the grateful girl whose life she had preserved at such a sacrifice; and there, for many weeks, she lay low down on the shore of the river of Death. She saw plainly the farther shore, and prayed daily for the white-robed angel, Azriel, to come and bear her across to that land of flowery bloom.

But she was not to die. Death seldom comes to those who wish it; and after many days, Annabel Meriton came weakly back to life. Health and strength were tardy about returning to her wasted body, but her mind was clear and calm. She had asked no questions concerning her lost beauty, but she knew from the fact that the mirrors in her room had been removed, that she was disfigured—perhaps hideous.

One day, late in April, when she was able to sit up for a little while, and look out upon the hills just taking on their garments of green, a message was brought to her that a gentleman was below, and desired a private interview with her. Oh! how she shrank from meeting any of her former friends, now with her altered face and maimed limbs! But she reflected, it must be, sooner or later; as well then as afterward, and she gave orders that her visitor should be shown up.

Directly the door opened, and Carl Mainwaring entered the room. There was no cold, repellent greeting now. The young man sprang toward her, and took both of her bandaged hands in his arm.

"Annabel!" he cried, passionately, "thank heaven that I find you thus! I had feared something worse!"

"Worse, Mr. Mainwaring? That could hardly be!"

"But it could! you might have been dead! and I doomed to a life of blackness and despair! God be praised! I can speak now, if it be but to receive your scorn! Nothing shall be kept back. My long, hopeless love is free, at last, to find vent in words! Annabel Meriton, you know my situation in life—poor, unknown, an obscure clergyman—will you take me, just as I am, take me for your husband?"

She started up in amazement. He forced her gently back in her chair and awaited her reply.

"Do not mock me!" she cried, bitterly, "I have feeling still, if my wealth and beauty are gone!"

"Mock you, Annabel! I would as soon mock my guardian angel!"

"Mr. Mainwaring, would you take me—poor, maimed, and disfigured as I am?"

"Take you! God only knows how rapturously! Annabel, when I heard of your father's loss of property, I fell upon my knees, and thanked heaven again and again! A part of the barrier between your heart and mine was removed—your recent misfortune took it entirely away. But for this, I would have torn my right hand from my body sooner than humbled my pride enough to ask one wealthy and beautiful as yourself to become the bride of one like me!"

"But I am changed—disgusting, perhaps."

"Changed! To me, you are this moment, what you have always been, the loveliest thing out of Paradise! Shall I call you mine?"

She stooped forward and laid her head on his shoulder. He gathered her up in his arms and held her there, caressing and soothing her with such words as a mother speaks to her sick child.

"My dearest Annabel! Mine to hold always here—mine to claim in eternity! You do not know how long and hopelessly I have worshiped you—how many times I vowed that never—no, never! would I ask you—high-born and tenderly nurtured as you had been—to leave the luxuries of your splendid home to share my hard, stern fate. From the first hour of your appearance at Whitestown, every thought and emotion of my heart was given to you—but I would not by word, or deed, reveal the love which reigned over me! My pride was my only armor, and it served me well. How narrowly I watched you, to see if I could detect any sign of your sentiments toward me, and sometimes I fancied that I was not indifferent to you. I dared not harbor that fancy, lest I should forswear my vow, and thus I lived on, struggling continually with my accursed pride! I have suffered untold

agonies—for I knew that I should never love again—a passion like mine exhausts itself on the first object, and for years I have accustomed myself to look forward to a lonely life! But the night of despair is ended, and joy cometh in the morning!"

It was a mild May morning—sweet with breath of apple blooms and opening flowers—that Carl Mainwaring and Annabel Meriton were made one.

The bridegroom was impatient, and Mr. Meriton had offered no objection to their speedy union. He thought they had waited in silence long enough. And so, before Annabel was able to leave her room, she was made the wife of him she had so long loved.

In the atmosphere of love and happiness which surrounded her now, Annabel came slowly back to beauty once more. She had been attended, during her illness, by a careful, as well as skillful, physician, and the burns upon her face and arms had been healed without leaving a single scar. And in time health reasserted her sway, and bloom and brilliancy glowed upon her cheeks in all their pristine glory. The soft hair grew again, and clung in little glossy ringlets close to her white temples, and Carl declared over and over, that Annabel Mainwaring was a thousand times lovelier than ever Annabel Meriton had been.

But this same haughty gentleman's pride was a little humbled, when one fine morning, a month after his marriage, the missing fleet of ships belonging to his father-in-law, came sailing into Boston harbor with their full cargoes on board, and uninjured in every particular.

A severe gale had compelled them to put into the port of Cadiz, and now here they were, safe and unharmed, and the profits of their lading fairly doubled the wealth of their owner. So Mr. Mainwaring had married an heiress and a beauty after all.

And Annabel says, laughingly, that but for her supposed poverty and her burned face, she should have been an old maid to this day.

FIRST AND LAST.

BY ELLA RODMAN.

THE name of Archibald Gimple had been respected in Pennybrook for several generations, for it generally belonged to men who understood the art of keeping what was their own, and getting what was their neighbors'; and the present incumbent of this dignity was considered fully equal, in these respects, to the Archibald Gimples who had preceded him. He considered farming the only respectable employment upon the face of the earth, and looked suspiciously upon all who were of a different calling. He was considered to be "rather set in his ways," but being so fully persuaded, himself, that his ways were always right ones, every one else involuntarily fell into the same way of thinking.

Archibald Gimple had married, somewhat late in life, a meek little woman, who probably accepted him because she did not dare to say no; and who seriously offended him by inconveniently departing this life before their infant daughter had reached the momentous crisis of teething. Archibald and "Mrs. Chick" could have laid their wise heads together upon the propriety of the late Mrs. Gimple's "making an effort;" but as this was a thing which she had never done in the whole course of her life, it could not be expected of her at the last moment.

The widower felt rather glad than thankful when he remembered his sister Perditha—the family had had a confused idea of Shakspeare, and the still less learned corrupted it into "Puddither"—although young in years, she was old in looks, and equal to any sort of emergency; and she was now requested to assume the place in her brother's household which Mrs. Gimple had so lately abandoned.

The baby had been named "Seraph" by its dying mother; and although Archibald looked upon it disdainfully as a cognomen "with nothing about it to take hold of," he respected the wishes of the dead sufficiently to leave it unchanged. The name was also a great affliction to Miss Perditha; if it had been "Sarah," she said, she could have gotten along with it; but it was hard work to twist her tongue to say, "Seraph"—it always seemed as if she was talking about some kind of flying thing.

And "a flying thing" the little Seraph proved as soon as she was old enough to get into mis-

chief; bewildering her aunt, and bewitching her father, until Miss Perditha was sorely perplexed between her desire of punishing the offender, and her fear of offending her brother. For it was very soon apparent that all the capacity of loving in Archibald Gimple's nature was drawn out, and appropriated by the blue-eyed mite who called him father. Miss Perditha declared that the child could twist him around her finger; and her sweet, little, winning ways were perfectly irresistible. She was a very pretty child, too, and the name suited her admirably.

Things went on pretty well until Seraph was about eight years old, when Miss Perditha began seriously to reflect that it was time to establish some sort of standing point between herself and her niece. The little damsel was exceedingly refractory, and she was getting entirely too old to have her own way so much; so Miss Perditha resolved that she should have *hers* on the very first opportunity.

The "opportunity" came on a sunny afternoon in October.

Miss Perditha had turned the house upside down for the semi-annual cleaning; and the delights of routing out closets, and turning various non-paying tenants adrift upon the world with their helpless families—to say nothing of an unlimited sway over soap-suds and scrubbing-brushes—banished from her mind, for several hours, the small circumstance of Miss Seraph's existence.

But after awhile, various little tasks, which eight-years-old fingers could very well accomplish to the relief of older ones, created a want for the damsel's company; and caused a summons for "*Ser-r-aff!*" to resound through the house in various tones, until it reached a very sharp "*Ser-aff!*" accompanied by an imperative command to "come right straight away this very instant!"

But no Seraph came, and Miss Perditha waxed indignant. The child was quite accustomed to rambling off by herself, and her absence was frequently looked upon as a relief; but that she should be out of the way when she was wanted, was a piece of malicious inattention that could not be passed over.

"Miss Puddither," observed Almira Hipple,

she had come to do the whitewashing, as she suspended her brush midway in the air, "If I was swearin' on a jury, I should say she was down the well, drowned herself, I des' say—young ones always help along in that way sich times as these."

"Miss Puddither" did look down the well, with a little trembling lest Seraph's bright eyes might be closed forever at the bottom of it; but just at this moment, a vision was entering the gate that caused her to abandon the search.

It was Seraph, herself; and yet so lovely, with her bright curls crowned with a wreath of autumn leaves, and her cheeks glowing with the rose-tint that seldom deepened—that, in spite of the quaint, little dress of coarse, brown merino, and the rough, country shoes, she looked like a wood-nymph, or one of those sweet, childish visions that float through German legends.

But Miss Perditha did not think of any of these things; she merely told Seraph that she looked like a fool, and inquired where she had been.

"I have been out, aunt Perditha," was the non-committal reply.

"*Out*, indeed!" exclaimed Miss Perditha, as she bore wrathfully down on the little forest queen, "it'll be *one* while, I guess, before you get *'out*' again, unless you tell me right away where you've been!"

"I've been in the woods," said Seraph, very composedly.

"I should think you *had*!" continued Miss Perditha, whose wrath was by no means appeased, "and rollin' your head in the leaves, I should think! seein' that so many have stuck in your curls."

The culprit was being borne up stairs during this colloquy. "Perhaps," observed her aunt, "you'd like to walk into the closet, until you can remember where you've been all this time, and what you've been doin'!"

"Aunt Perditha," said the child, earnestly, for she was not partial to closets, "I tell you I've been in the woods, and I haven't been doing anything—I mean anything bad."

Now Seraph was not an obstinate or a deceitful child—she was not more explicit in this case simply because she knew, from past experience, that Miss Perditha would only ridicule the pleasure she had taken in the beauty of those October woods; and ~~nothing~~ kept her silent respecting all mention of her companion.

"March in!" said the enraged spinster, as they reached the destined closet; and poor little Seraph was ignominiously pushed in by

the shoulders, and heard the key turn in the lock with a feeling of heart sinking, which can only be appreciated by those who have been similarly situated. But she was a brave, little thing; and instead of crying or screaming, she settled herself as comfortably as possible, and, mounting the good steed Imagination, was soon back in the woods again.

Miss Perditha returned to her work with a flushed face, and remarked to Miss Hipple that "She didn't care a pin about knowin' where the young one had been—she guessed she hadn't been at no great harm, any how—but when she set out to do a thing, she meant to carry it through, and before Seraph came out of that closet, *one* of 'em had got to give in, and she guessed that her name wouldn't be Perditha Gimple."

"Then," replied Almira, "it'll hev' to be changed to Puddither somethin' else, for that 'ere little Seruff ain't the kind to 'give in.'"

"We shall see," said Miss Perditha, with a lofty air.

Seraph had been in captivity an hour, when Miss Perditha heard a voice from the closet.

Rather triumphantly, she went to the door to receive the expected confession. "What is it?" she inquired.

"Aunt Perditha," said Seraph, very quietly, "I'm cold."

This would never do! Suppose that the child should get sick, Archibald would tear her eyes out; so, under the influence of these thoughts, Miss Perditha very considerably enveloped the culprit in a large blanket.

"Aunt Perditha," remarked Seraph, "I'm very much obliged to you for wrapping me up so nicely, but I *ain't* obliged to you for putting me in the closet."

The door was locked again; and although Miss Perditha made frequent visits to that neighborhood, for the express purpose of listening for the first sound of "giving in" from Seraph, her ears were not refreshed by anything of the kind; and, at last, she was obliged to take the child out, for fear that her brother would come in and find her there. Seraph did not bear malice; and, curling herself up in Miss Perditha's lap, she went fast asleep, with the leaf-crowned curls resting against her shoulder.

So Archibald Gimple found her when he came in; and to him she gave an account of herself without any reservation:

John Ender, a boy of thirteen, the son of a neighbor, had found her outside of the gate, whither she had retreated to escape the house-cleaning, and invited her to go chestnutting

with him. She always liked John, for he was never rude to her at school, but helped her with her lessons, and shielded her from punishment; and the two children walked off, hand in hand, to the woods, which were not far distant. The chestnuts proved to be few and far between, but they managed to enjoy themselves extravagantly; and John wreathed the curls of his pretty, little companion in the fantastic manner that had excited Miss Perditha's contempt; and then the boy looked admiringly at Seraph, and told her that she must be his little wife, and asked if she would make him this promise? To which Seraph replied, with much dignity, that she was too young to think of such things yet; but when she got to be as old as he was, which seemed to her very ancient indeed, she thought it very likely that she would—if her father would let her.

"And I want you to let me, father," she added, "for John is so nice—and then I s'pose we should live in the same house, and we could go to the woods every day." With this sage conclusion, the young lady went off to sleep again.

"Sister Perdithy," said Archibald, looking anything but pleased, "I don't want any of this nonsense in the child's head!"

"And I should like to know, brother Archibald," replied Miss Perditha, in a dignified manner, "how I am to help it? You think as if all I had to do was jest to take a fine tooth-comb and comb it out! I should think I'd had trouble enough with the young one for one day; and I guess that any notion *she* takes into her head she'll carry out, for she's the most obstinate little creature I ever laid eyes on!"

"I don't want no partic'ler dealin's with none o' that Enden kit," continued Archibald, wrathfully, "a poor, shiftless set, from the father down, that don't know how to make money nor to keep it neither—and what Seraph'll hev' ain't goin' to stop *them* leaks, I guess! I'd ruther give it to somebody that'd make more of it than less."

The next day, John Enden, who was a manly little fellow, presented himself before Mr. Archibald Gimple, as that gentleman was leaning over his front gate; and modestly requested, not exactly that Seraph should be handed over into his keeping at once, but that such an arrangement might be quaranteed to him at no very distant period—about thirteen years for a lady, and eighteen for a gentleman, Master Enden appeared to consider a justifiable age for committing matrimony.

There are some people so unfortunately con-

stituted that they never can, under any circumstances, appreciate the ridiculous. This was the case with Archibald Gimple; and instead of answering with kind pleasantry the enthusiastic boy, whose handsome, intelligent face was lifted up to him so hopefully, he moved his hat slightly on one side, which gave him a sort of rakish appearance, and, fixing his eyes on John with a look that caused the bright color to spread itself over his face, he slowly remarked,

"Young man, I think you've been down in the cellar lately after cider, and forgot to whistle all the way up."

John did not think this very kind; but he controlled his feelings sufficiently to answer firmly, but respectfully,

"I have not been after cider, sir. We haven't any to go after; but I do like Seraph very much, and she says that she likes me; and if you will promise not to let her marry anybody else, I am going to be a great man some of these days, and then she shall have whatever she likes."

"How do you expect to be a great man?" asked Archibald, dryly.

"I expect to *work*," replied John, a little proudly.

"Humph!" was the encouraging rejoinder, although Archibald Gimple was somewhat softened by this prompt avowal, "When you own that cottage over there," said he, pointing with his finger, "and have enough else to keep a wife, of your own earning, I'll promise to give you Seraph."

With the feelings of malicious characters in fairy tales, when they have set some impossible task to a victim, Archibald withdrew into the house; and John Enden eyed the pretty cottage with a resolute determination. That cottage, with Seraph in it, to be *his*! Why, it was worth any amount of toil and trying; and, although only a boy of thirteen, and Seraph a child of eight, it appeared by no means an impossible accomplishment.

And this was Seraph Gimple's first offer.

When John Enden was eighteen, he left home to seek his fortune. Seraph had turned her bright ringlets up in a comb, and looked quite womanly; but she still retained her childish affection for John, and her winning, mischievous ways. Archibald Gimple seldom unbent to the aspiring youth; and whenever he thought of him, it was with a feeling of extreme dissatisfaction. The boy had grown tall and handsome, and there was a certain self-respect about him that was particularly irritating to Archibald.

John went to New York, as clerk in a large establishment; and began manfully to fight his

way up to Seraph; while his unwilling father-in-law elect could scarcely conceal his pleasure at being rid of him, and sincerely hoped that no perverse wind would waft him back again.

John did return, sometimes, for a short summer vacation; and always found Seraph more lovely than ever, and every time it became harder to leave her. But this was his only hope of staying with her always, and he went bravely back to work.

When Seraph was about seventeen, her father, one evening, brought home a gentleman with him who was quite different from any one she had ever seen before. He called himself Christopher Geales; and Mr. Gimple became acquainted with him at the Pennybrook Hotel, where he was sojourning for awhile.

He was apparently about thirty years old, and was quite handsome and distinguished-looking. There was nothing alarmingly showy about him, however; his expression was rather melancholy, and he had a sensible, matter-of-fact way of talking that won Mr. Gimple's confidence. No one would have suspected him of being a speculator; he seemed to have a vast fund of knowledge upon any subject, and yet it came out inadvertently as though the owner were rather desirous of concealing it.

Mr. Geales came to tea; and his manner to Seraph was respectfully reserved; while Miss Gimple was the delighted recipient of many flattering little attentions, until she began to imagine that she did not look so very old, after all, and Mr. Geales must be a very sensible man.

Archibald Gimple had many conversations with the stranger, after that; and in a short time, Mr. Geales became quite domesticated at the house. The two made numerous journeys over the farm; and Mr. Geales was continually picking up bits of stone or earth, and explaining them to his companion, much to Perditha's perplexity; for, although she tried hard to listen to these conferences, she never was able to take in sufficient to form any conclusions. Queer measurements of land seemed to be going on, too; and Archibald Gimple began to hold his head still higher, and to feel more self-important than ever.

"How would my little Seraph like to ride in her own carriage," said he, one day, "with a pair of splendid horses, and a fine coachman and footman?"

Seraph was very naturally surprised to find such visions floating through the mind of her staid father; but she answered, pleasantly, that they might be fine, but she didn't believe that John would ever be able to afford them, and she

could be quite happy without them, as she always had been.

"There are other folks in the world besides John!" exclaimed her father, impatiently. "I wish that you'd never seen him!"

"Oh! father," remonstrated Seraph, with a heart-broken look; but Archibald Gimple banged the gate after him, as he strode angrily down the road, and Seraph went to her own room to indulge in a private fit of crying.

That evening, Mr. Geales asked her to marry him.

Seraph was considerably surprised and frightened; but she withdrew the little hand that he had taken possession of as soon as possible, and told him of her engagement to John Enden.

Mr. Geales bit his lip, and it was well that she did not see his face; but when she looked up again, she encountered only an expression of respectful interest, and a few kind words drew from her the whole story. Mr. Geales assured her that he had no idea of this before; and that now he should keep a constant eye upon John, because he might be able to aid him, or rather to put him in the way of aiding himself, which he should take pleasure in doing for Seraph's sake.

All this, Seraph thought, was very kind indeed of Mr. Geales; and she expressed her thanks so prettily that he became firmly determined not to permit John Enden to win the prize. That night he wrote a letter to some city acquaintances, the consequence of which was a most unexpected visit.

John Enden sat at his plodding work in the dull counting-house, wearily wondering when the goal would be reached at this rate, and tormented by the fear that Seraph might be forced by her father to accept some more favored suitor before he had earned the right to claim her; when his thoughts were brought back to the present by hearing an inquiry for Mr. Enden.

Two plain, respectable-looking strangers had approached him; and, with the facility of a castle-builder, John immediately prepared himself to hear that he was "to go somewhere and hear something to his advantage."

He was not to go, however; it was to be told him then and there; and the visitors, one of whom announced himself as "Mr. Mettlegate," and his companion as "Mr. Clickwell," blandly addressed John, as though they were perfectly acquainted with all his affairs; and, remarking that they had been told of the faithful manner in which Mr. Enden discharged all the business entrusted to him, and his desire of increasing his income, they had called to offer him a little

occupation for his evenings, if he had no objection to further employment.

Objection! John was but twenty-two; and his heart gave a great bound when he thought of Seraph and the cottage, which seemed nearer than they had ever yet been; but he stood gazing at Mr. Mettlegate in silence, while that gentleman proceeded to unfold the nature of the "employment."

He was examining John's handwriting, and having shown it to Mr. Clickwell, both professed themselves satisfied with it.

"In the first place," said Mr. Mettlegate, impressively, "this little transaction between us must never be mentioned. The part that you are to fill is one that is eagerly desired by a number of persons, and we should probably excite enmity by thus favoring you; then, too, employers have a natural jealousy of their clerks undertaking any business but theirs, and on many accounts it will be better to keep it entirely between ourselves."

John promised strict secrecy—what would he not have promised then?

Mr. Mettlegate, however, merely informed him that his employment would be confined to writing; and, having given him particular directions to find a street and number in an out-of-the-way region, where he was to call that evening, the gentlemen departed.

John received several reproofs during the day for the unusually careless manner in which his work was executed, but his mind was full of other matter; and punctually at the hour appointed, he turned into the obscure street to which he had been directed.

While gazing about for the number, for it was extremely dark, he felt a hand laid upon his arm; and, turning in some fear, he encountered the benignant gaze of Mr. Clickwell, who took him at once under his wing; and after parading around several blocks, in what appeared to John a very zigzag and confusing manner, they reached the back entrance of a large, shabby-looking house.

Mr. Clickwell led the way through dark passages, and up innumerable flights of stairs, until John concluded that they must have reached the very top of the house. They entered a large room, very nicely fitted up as a large library, and containing several queer-looking tables, covered with papers and utensils, and one large desk that was quite formidable in its proportions.

At this desk John was seated; and then Mr. Mettlegate made his appearance.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Enden,"

said that gentleman, with a manner of mingled dignity and benevolence; "but before proceeding to business, I wish to arrange a few preliminaries with you. The nature of your employment must remain a secret even from you—it is enough to say that it is state business ('another word wanted there,' murmured Mr. Clickwell, in a tone that nobody heard) in which you will be engaged, and probably you have not the slightest idea of the position of the individual who now addresses you?"

John admitted that he had not; but in his own mind he set him down as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, or Secretary of State.

Mr. Mettlegate smiled in a manner suited to disguised royalty conversing familiarly with a subject, and said, '(still as disguised royalty,)

"You will never know me in any other character than that of 'Mr. Mettlegate;' my present business is to make you satisfied with *him*. As your work here can only be done in what should be your hours of recreation, it is but right that your compensation should be high."

He then mentioned a sum for every evening's work that fairly startled John into the belief that he must be dreaming. The alacrity with which he seized his pen caused his companion to smile; and very soon John was writing away for dear life, copying over and over again the signature on a piece of written paper before him, and which appeared to be the transfer of a large sum of money. Mr. Clickwell was working at one of the tables, and from the glimpse that John caught of his employment, he imagined that this must be a branch of the mint.

At length Mr. Mettlegate pronounced John's work perfect, and praised his new clerk's skillfulness very highly. Gold was put into his hand, at his departure, and an instant dismissal threatened if a living creature were informed of this night's work. But there was no fear of John, and so Mr. Mettlegate felt; his frank, open nature was entirely unsuspicious of evil, and he had a dim idea that he was serving his country in some honorable way, at the same time that he was working for Seraph.

"What under the sun air you doin'?" inquired a neighbor of Archibald Gimple.

Archibald smiled in a superior manner, as he replied,

"Ain't sure that I'm *doin'* anything; I'm *tryin'* to do."

"Thought you didn't approve of tryin'!" continued the neighbor. "'Pears to me I've heerd tell of a man who upst his hull house diggin' under it for a pot of gold."

This was not at all agreeable to Archibald, and he vouchsafed no reply.

Mr. Geales had persuaded his friend, as well as himself, that copper was to be found in great abundance on the Gimple farm; and drew such a glowing picture of the fabulous profits to be derived from working the mine, that Archibald Gimple, opposed as he was to all experiments, and "new fangled notions," fell eagerly in with the plan, and drew nearly all his spare funds to carry on the operations.

Miss Perditha looked upon Mr. Geales with very different feelings when she found that he wanted her niece, instead of herself; and she cautioned "brother Archibald" in vain against reposing too much trust in a stranger. His mind was set upon dazzling all Pennybrook, and casting a fresh halo upon the name of Gimple; and the voice of "Sister Perdithy" sounded in his ears very much like the buzzing of a noisy fly.

Time wore on, as the novelists say; and one June morning, John Enden came back to Pennybrook with money enough to buy Seraph of her father. The pretty cottage was not for sale just then; but this was not the point, as long as he had money enough to get it.

Archibald Gimple was very uneasy during this interview; and demanded rather abruptly where John had gotten his money so soon.

"Honestly, sir," replied the young man, with a flushed face, "by working at all sorts of hours, and thinking of Seraph to keep me from being tired."

This was straightforward enough; and finding no sufficient reason for breaking the compact, Archibald just refused point blank to give him his daughter, without any reason at all.

John Enden's feelings cannot be described; but with no word of disrespect for the father of Seraph, he quietly left the house in the hope that a short reflection would bring Mr. Gimple to his senses.

"Oh! father!" exclaimed Seraph, who had been in an adjoining room during the interview, "you promised!"

Archibald turned from his daughter's pleading face to superintend the operations of the workmen; and Seraph flew to aunt Perditha.

"Seraph," said she, in a solemn manner, "I feel it in my bones that somehow or another, and at some time or other, you'll marry John Enden. I'll never forget the time I locked you up in the closet, and had to wrap you in a blanket to keep you from ketchin' cold, and how you stuck it out there, hour after hour, until I got scared, and had to fetch you out. I think jest the same now as I did then, that you

air the most obstinate little creature I ever laid eyes on, and whatever you set out to do, you'll do."

With which comforting remarks, aunt Perditha kissed the tearful face of her pretty niece, and sat down again to her sewing.

Seraph was "an obstinate little creature"—she began to grow pale and thin with all her might; and not even waffles, her favorite weakness, could tempt her, as Miss Perditha said, "to eat more than enough to keep a bird alive;" which is rather indefinite, as it is generally understood that some birds eat a great deal more than others—vultures, for instance. Seraph's appetite, however, was on the canary bird pattern.

Archibald Gimple was considerably troubled. His only child, the pride of his heart, was fading away before his eyes; and his hardly-earned money was doing the same thing, with no present prospect of getting it back. Seraph's looks made him really unhappy; and when Mr. Geales came to talk to him, as a friend of both parties, and try to persuade him to receive John Enden as a son-in-law, he was quite ready to be persuaded; and Mr. Geales had the pleasure of doing a benevolent and disinterested action.

The gratitude of the young couple was unbounded; and Seraph confessed to aunt Perditha that, if she had never seen John, she did think she should have loved Mr. Geales. This benevolent Howard was very much occupied in writing letters; but, grateful as they felt, he was not at all missed—Miss Perditha doubted if the roof of the house would be, if it should take a notion to come off.

The young couple were to live at home until the owner of the cottage was disposed to sell it; and Miss Perditha and Almira Hipple again worked in concert to make Seraph's room as attractive as possible. The bride-elect, as Miss Perditha observed, was in such a flutter that she wasn't worth her salt; and, as for John, he did nothing but be in the way.

The day arrived; and the stiff, white-satin dress, which John had brought from the city, was made up in the queer fashion of forty years ago; but Seraph could not be disfigured, even by that barbarous style, and a lovelier bride had never been seen in Pennybrook.

Seraph stood before the glass, with a slight feeling of pardonable vanity, waiting for the summons to go down stairs, and wondering why they made such a noise below—when in rushed Almira Hipple, in a great state of excitement, exclaiming in a very vague and disconnected manner,

"Don't go down, Seruff! P'raps they'll want you, too!"

"Of course, they want her," said Miss Perditha, sternly. "What do you mean, Almiry? Is it time to go down?"

"My sakes me!" continued "Almiry," still regarding Seraph, "if you ain't had a blessed escape of bein' a forgeress!"

Miss Perditha rushed down stairs, but Seraph was before her. How she got down she never could tell; every vestige of color had left her face, and, white as the bridal dress she wore, she was possessed with the one idea that something dreadful had happened to John.

As she reached the bottom of the stairs, she saw a carriage at the door, and John Enden lifted into it by two police officers. Her father's anger was too deep for words, except a murmured execration—Mr. Geales looked regretful, but satisfied that justice should take its course—and the invited guests whispered together in little knots about "forgery" and "counterfeiting."

John's head was bowed, and he made no resistance; but at the last moment he turned, and beheld his wife that would have been close beside him. "Oh! Seraph!" he exclaimed, and he would have said more, but the men hurried him into the carriage, while kind hands seized Seraph, and carried her up stairs.

Poor John! he was the victim of a deeply-laid scheme: counterfeit money was found upon him when the officers came to him, and the proofs of forgery were just as conclusive. The villains, whose tool he had been, had exposed him in obedience to orders they had received; but they had effected their escape, and were now far beyond the reach of the law. John Enden was taken to the States' Prison.

For a long time Seraph showed no signs of life. The deadly swoon into which she had fallen was alarming; and then brain fever set in, and it seemed doubtful if she would ever leave the room alive. Day after day, and week after week was she watched and tended; and at last reason and consciousness returned. But John was lost to her forever; her father had taken a savage pleasure in telling her, as soon as she was able to bear it, that he was expiating his crime in the States' Prison; and Archibald had forbidden any one to mention his name again.

The Endens could not stay in Pennybrook after their disgrace; they moved off, no one knew where, and all clue to John was lost. Seraph shed bitter tears to think how he had deceived her; but it was a long, long time before she could cease to love him.

The Gimple farm, indignant at being mistaken for a copper-mine, revenged itself by becoming neither one nor the other; and Archibald Gimple, a broken-down old man, pleaded with his daughter to save him from want by marrying Mr. Geales. It was a long time before Seraph consented, but finally she married him; and her husband faithfully took charge of them all as long as his money lasted. Seraph never knew her husband's guilt toward John Enden, and it was well for her peace of mind that she did not; he was always kind and affectionate to her, and when he died she sincerely lamented him, although not as she would have lamented John. He had ruined himself, as he ruined his father-in-law; but Archibald Gimple was now beyond all earthly care for "food and raiment," and only Seraph and aunt Perditha were left.

Miss Gimple had a little property, with which she purchased a small house in another part of Pennybrook; and resuming her original trade of tailoress, aunt and niece lived together, and worked and suffered in concert.

On a sultry afternoon in August, two ladies sat in the narrow strip of entry (which not even courtesy could dignify by the name of "hall,") that belonged to a small, plain house in a by street of Pennybrook. The day was very warm, and the front door had been left open to admit all the breeze there was to enter—giving a fine view of the marigolds, coxcombs, and French lilacs that adorned "the court-yard."

The ladies, who both wore spectacles, were sewing busily on men's garments; and there was a sweetness of expression in the face of the younger one that had outlived the perishing beauty of features and complexion.

"Seraph!" exclaimed the elder lady, peering sharply through her spectacles, "there comes one of them plaguey men, I do believe, with somethin' to sell! Why can't they git some honest employment, instead of trapsin' round the country? Looks like that horrid man with the papers of needles, who bawls at you to keep 'em until he comes for 'em—and then when he *does* come, he declares that he's left a paper more than he has and wants you to pay for 'em!"

Seraph smiled sweetly, but with perfect indifference, and afterward she gave a little sigh; while Miss Perditha Gimple, a spry maiden of over eighty, moved to the door to overwhelm the intruder.

"Clear out!" she exclaimed, in a shrill voice, "don't want none o' your trash and trumpery!"

He was an elderly, white-haired man; and he now looked very composedly at the excited

spinster. "Can I see the lady of the house?" said he.

"What do you take *me* for, I should like to know!" was the indignant rejoinder. "Do you suppose I'm a 'help,' or what?"

The man smiled a little, as he put the question in a different form, "Can I see Mrs. Seraph Geales?"

"I dare say you ken, if you open your eyes," said Miss Perditha, tartly; for Seraph stood in the doorway, shading her face with her hand, and looking almost breathlessly at the man.

"Who—who are you?" said she, at last.

"Do you know me, Seraph?" asked a voice that was marvelously familiar; and John Enden came close up to her.

She looked at him for a moment, and then remembering where she had last seen him, she turned and walked into the house. More than forty years had passed since then, and Seraph sat down and wept like a child. John Enden followed her, and sat down a little way off, gazing at her with a loving, commiserating look.

"Well, if this ain't imperdence!" exclaimed Miss Perditha, who still felt it her duty to act as duenna, "I should think you wouldn't hev the face to come into this house at all!"

But the intruder sat looking at Seraph; and in a few moments he spoke, "Do not look upon me as a villain, Seraph; I am an innocent man, and have suffered most unjustly—when you are calm, I will tell you about it."

Although the youthful brightness had long since departed from Seraph's eyes, the gentle, confiding look was still there, and such a look she now fixed upon John Enden; while Miss Perditha took up the neglected work with much apparent dignity, although inwardly consumed by curiosity to hear what John had to say.

"My first knowledge of forgers, Seraph, came with the discovery that I had been made their tool. It was a cruel, cruel business—but the disgrace, the imprisonment, and all, were nothing to losing *you*. I had toiled for you, Seraph, and that very toil was the means of losing you! I was not kept long in imprisonment, though—I had a few kind friends, and through their exertions, it was proved that I was innocent. But I was ill for a long time after that, and out of my mind; and when I at last recovered, and heard of you, you were married. I cared for nothing in the world then, and went off to sea in a fit of despair. We were chased by pirates, and captured; and I, and several companions, were sold into slavery. For twenty years, Seraph, I wore chains; and, at the end of that time, we escaped. I had gained some know-

ledge of trade, and contrived to take with me some of the gold which I felt that I had justly earned; I traveled about with merchandise from place to place—until, at last, I have reached my native shore with more than money enough to buy the cottage. I could not rest without coming to tell you this, Seraph."

Seraph Geales went up to John Enden and took his hand. "Forgive us all," said she, "the wrong that we have done you—and to prove it, come and live in Pennybrook."

"I will, Seraph," was the reply, "but it must be as we promised to live, so many years ago."

"Oh! John!" exclaimed Seraph, pointing to the silver hair so neatly banded beneath her cap, "do you not see that I am an old woman now, and you are an old man? We should both rather be thinking of the Land where 'there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage.'"

"And will it make us think of it any the less," pleaded John, "if we spend our few remaining years together? Seraph," he continued, earnestly, "had you married me *then*, do you believe that you would have ceased to love me when 'an old man?' Or that I would have ceased to love *you* when 'an old woman?'"

"No! no!" replied Seraph, covering her face with her hands, as she thought of all those long years, when they might and should have been together, "but people would laugh at us, John, for marrying at *our* age."

"Let them laugh," said he, "it is not our fault that we have been obliged to wait so long; and I want you and aunt Perditha both to help me keep house."

"Aunt Perditha," said Seraph, when John had left them, "what do *you* think of it? Doesn't it seem foolish?"

"I always believe," said Miss Gimple, as she creased down a seam, "in followin' out a principle, all things bein' equal—and, as long as you once made up your mind to marry John Enden, and was hindered by 'unforeseen circumstances,' I should show that I know'd my own mind by doin' it now—the circumstances bein' out of the way."

"But we are so *old*, now," said Seraph, sadly.

"Well, I don't kalkilate that you expect to grow any younger?" said Miss Perditha.

With Miss Gimple's advice may have been mingled the idea that "keeping house" for John Enden would be much pleasanter than tailoring; but she really loved her niece, and thought that she was only considering Seraph's interests.

They were married on that fifteenth of October; and although they tried to keep it as quiet as possible, the bells were rung furiously.

FLIRTING ON SKATES.

BY CATHARINE WARE.

A LITTLE more than a year ago, one morning in the last of November, as I sat sewing, Mattie Russell burst in upon me, her round, rosy, little face radiant with happiness, to tell me that her brother Clinton had come home from Cambridge, that he had brought with him his friend, Mr. Ward, of New York, and that she wanted me to come and take tea with her the next day. She had invited no one else, she said, except her cousin, Corinne Carey. So to tea the next afternoon I went.

Mattie Russell, my most intimate friend, was then just nineteen years old, a lovable, warm-hearted, sunny little body, with a face, if not positively pretty, very pleasant to look at, and a figure so short and plump, that, as I tell her to tease her, Lord Byron would have pronounced her "dumpy." Her mother having died many years ago, she was at the head of the family, making a capital little housekeeper, her father said. Clinton, her only brother, as a boy, was my playfellow and champion, and, as a young man, seemed to me the very embodiment of all that was brave, and manly, and generous, and true. He had gone to study at the Law School in Cambridge, and this was the first time he had been at home for four long months.

Clinton met me at the door as I entered the house, and greeted me with all his old frank cordiality and warmth of manner. Mr. Ward, who was leaning luxuriously back in a large easy-chair in front of the fire, his eyes fixed dreamily on the bright coals, and his fine, delicately cut profile brought out in bold relief by the crimson velvet of the chair against which it rested, rose and bowed with quiet grace, when Clinton introduced him to me. Kin Carey, as we call her, came so late that Mattie was just wondering if it would be best to wait for her any longer. She looked brilliantly beautiful as she entered the room, her slender, but finely rounded form set off by her dress of dark crimson cashmere, her rich, brown hair covering the back of her graceful little head with its glossy coils, and her cheeks glowing with superb color; and when she bowed to Mr. Ward, raising her full, brown eyes for a moment to his face, and then letting them fall again, till they were hidden by their long, dark lashes, I saw a sudden light of surprise and admiration flash in his clear blue eyes.

Corinne saw it too, I've no doubt, and secretly exulted at the prospect of making an immediate conquest of the handsome, young stranger. For she was an arrant flirt, and had used her power of fascinating gentlemen so long, that it had almost become a passion with her. She had had lovers without number, whom she had brought to her feet to gratify her love of conquest, and then discarded when they ceased to please, thinking it "better to be off with the old love, before she was on with a new;" and at present was amusing herself by encouraging the attentions of Dr. Bartol, the young physician of our little village, who lavished on the fickle, shallow beauty a love of which she was unworthy.

After tea, Mr. Ward sat holding a skein of worsted which Corinne was winding, talking to her in low tones, with eyes intent upon her face, and a manner that conveyed the most delicate flattery, by its respectful, yet evident admiration. Corinne kept her head bent down over the worsted, which proved very snarly, but occasionally looked up at him with a "low rippling laugh," and an arch look in the splendid eyes, in answer to something he said that was irresistible. Clinton was giving Mattie and me an animated description of the skaters and skating in Cambridge, of the fashionable amusement it had become for ladies, and the crowds of them he had often seen skating with a grace and speed that the gentlemen could envy, not attain, and finally ended by telling us that he was going to teach us.

Now in our little village, skating had always been considered as exclusively a masculine amusement, so Mattie and I opened our eyes in astonishment at such a novel idea as *our* learning to skate.

"Oh! but you will like it so much!" said Clinton, "and it is such capital exercise, just picture it to yourselves; the exhilaration, and delightful glow, and feeling of freedom as you glide over the smooth ice in the pure, bracing air, with a swiftness that makes you feel as though you had wings on your feet, instead of skates! There is nothing in the world to equal it, unless it is a canter on a spirited horse, on a bright October morning!"

"Kate Ware," said Mattie, to me, with an emphatic nod, "we will learn."

"Of course you will," said Clinton, "and

you couldn't have a better place than the canal, for it's frozen hard, and as smooth as glass. Charley, what do you say to teaching the young ladies to skate during our vacation?"

Mr. Ward's eyes were intent on Corinne's little, white fingers, as they skillfully picked out a knot; but he looked up quick!y, and, tossing the light, wavy hair off his forehead, answered with enthusiasm, "It would be delightful, if they would allow us the privilege. Have you never skated, Miss Carey? Then do learn, a graceful girl never looks more charming than when skating."

So the two gentlemen talked about it, so eloquently portraying its charms, that we girls finally became as enthusiastic as they were, and in imagination already beheld ourselves on skates, "skimming over the ice like birds," as Clinton said.

The next morning, as I was energetically sweeping the parlor, an old, green veil tied over my hair to protect it from the dust, and the furniture all huddled up in one corner, Mattie and Kin Carey burst into the room.

"Oh! you're busy!" said Mattie, drawing back.

"Never mind, Kate! just let your sweeping go a little while, we want to talk over this skating business with you," said Corinne.

So I dropped my broom, dusted off the sofa for them, and sat down duster in hand.

"You see, Kate," began Corinne, eagerly, "Mattie and I have been talking it over this morning, and we've come to the conclusion, that it would be better for us to go skating without the gentlemen the first two or three times. My brother Tom says we shall have a dreadful time, when we first have on skates, look so awkward, and tumble down, and nobody knows what all. And I'm sure I'm not going to cut such a ridiculous figure before the gentlemen!"

"Oh! dear, nor I," said Mattie, looking very serious. "I know they'd be laughing at us in their sleeves—Clinton especially, for he always says when I fall I roll like a ball."

"They're too polite to laugh, both of them," I said, "and we shall need somebody to teach us."

We finally agreed, however, after an earnest discussion of the pros and cons, to go very privately all by ourselves till the worst was over; then when we allowed them to go with us to teach us, of course they would be amazed at our skill. Fortunately for our plans, they were both going to spend a week with a college chum of theirs, who lived at Melton, twenty-five miles

off, so that there was no danger of their discovering us skating, for we could practice while they were gone.

On Friday morning, more than an hour after Clinton Russell and Mr. Ward had driven through the village on their way to Melton, Mattie, Kin Carey, and I proceeded in high glee to the canal—which extends many miles into the country, and was covered with thick, smooth ice, and sheltered from view by the evergreens growing along its course—and accompanied by Tom Carey, a boy of fourteen, to strap our skates and make himself generally useful, made our first attempt at skating. We, none of us, I am sure, ever felt so utterly helpless and awkward in our lives, as when we first found ourselves upright on our skates. To stand still with the smooth runners slipping on the glassy ice seemed out of the question, and to move and balance ourselves on half an inch of steel was equally impossible; and, when we fell, we had to stay down till Tom could get us up again! We were like so many ten-pins that require constant setting up; and the setting up was no easy matter, especially when the solid, little Mattie fell. The canal rang with our peals of laughter.

"Doesn't the Bible say the feet of the wicked are set in slippery places, Mattie?" said Corinne, trembling, tipping, and tottering on her skates.

"Kin Carey," began Mattie, reprovingly, when, suddenly lurching forward, she caught her foot in her cousin's skate, and both together went down with a crash. At this moment, I heard a sound of suppressed laughter, and, looking up, saw the faces of Messrs. Russell and Ward convulsed with mirth, as they looked at us through the trees on the high bank. A shout from Tom announced the terrible fact to the others. Corinne tried with all her might to scramble up, but in vain; Mattie, too provoked to stir, the crown of her bonnet knocked in, and a big bump on her forehead, sat still and scolded them soundly. For myself, I stood stock still not daring to move, though painfully conscious that both skates were toed in, trying to look dignified and keep my balance too. It was in vain that the gentlemen tried to appease us, by telling us that they had been looking at us but a moment, as they were driving back to the village for something they had forgotten, Corinne pouted bewitchingly, and Mattie sternly bade them depart. So they went, but looked back mischievously, waving their hats to us till they were out of sight. We were so much disconcerted that we very soon after went home, laughing heartily in spite of our vexation.

We went skating so often during the fortnight that our friends, fortunately for us, were absent, that we improved very fast, and learned not only to do without assistance from Tom, but to take some very respectable strokes: Kin Carey especially bade fair to make a fine skater. As soon as Clinton and his friend returned, they arranged a skating party consisting of Mattie, Kin Carey, and me, themselves and Dr. Bartol, whom Clinton insisted on inviting, notwithstanding hints to the contrary expressed by Corinne. The plan was, that we should skate up the canal as far as "Bright's"—a public house near the canal, where pleasure parties from our village usually go for a supper—rest there, have supper, and then drive home by the road by moonlight. We all met at the Russells' on the appointed afternoon. Kin Carey laughed, and talked, and flirted with Mr. Ward, who kept constantly at her side, and would not even look at Dr. Bartol when he entered the room; and when he came toward her, his pale, blue eyes lighted up with a smile, and said in his quick, nervous way, "Oh! Miss Corinne, I'm so glad to see you are going with us," replied, "Are you?" in a tone of supreme indifference, and turned again with a fascinating smile to Mr. Ward.

After a short, brisk walk we reached the canal, and seated ourselves, skates in hand, on some large stones to strap on our skates.

"May I put on your skates for you?" said Dr. Bartol, timidly, to Kin Carey, who sat holding hers.

"No, thank you," she answered, coolly, "I'm not going to have them on yet."

Poor Dr. Bartol! so homely and so good, I pitied him as he disconsolately came and strapped mine for me. In a moment, Mr. Ward, who had gone back a few steps after one of his skates he had dropped, came up to Corinne, and said with an air of graceful self-confidence, "I shall do myself the honor of putting on those Cinderella skates that you have in your hands, shall I not, Miss Carey? See with what humility I kneel at the feet of my 'fair ladye,'" as he knelt down on the ice before her, and took on his knee the little foot she coquettishly put out, and strapped on the skate.

"I'm sorry to trouble you, Mr. Ward," said Corinne, very sweetly.

"Don't call it trouble," he answered, with an expressive look.

Dainty little feet they were, that he handled so delicately, encased in the prettiest of boots, with thick soles and high heels, and fitting like a glove. No wonder he was long putting the

skates on! Dr. Bartol put on mine in half the time. When at last we were all ready, Mattie and I determined to show off and surprise the gentlemen, so we struck out boldly by ourselves at once, and declined, as unnecessary, the aid they no doubt expected we should be thankful for. Mattie especially, dear little soul! dashed into it in a neck-or-nothing style that cost her half a dozen falls at once, and caused a general burst of laughter, in which she good-naturedly joined.

Corinne, however, to Mattie's secret amusement and my own, was charmingly timid and helpless, she would not trust herself alone, and was afraid to have Mr. Ward leave her a moment; and truly he showed no inclination to. At length though she exclaimed magnanimously, "There, Mr. Ward! you shall not be bothered with me any longer, I'd rather fall than be such a trouble to you!" Mr. Ward remonstrated in vain, and, since she compelled him to leave her to herself, hovered anxiously round her. For a few moments she did very well, then suddenly pitched forward, and would have fallen had not Mr. Ward darted forward and caught her in his arms. Corinne drew herself up, looked becomingly dignified and reserved for a moment, and finally resigned herself into his charge entirely.

Clinton was the best skater of the three gentlemen. Mr. Ward was very graceful and easy, as he was everywhere: but Clinton excelled in speed, as we found when they all tried a race together. We girls being tired, sat down at the side of the canal and watched them. Clinton got in advance of the other two at once, and came flying past us, his skates gliding with marvelous swiftness over the ice; his strong, manly form inclined forward a little; and his dark, curly hair blown back from his animated face, as, with a smile and a wave of his cap, he shot past us.

"I am beaten, you see," said Mr. Ward, in his clear, quiet voice, as he glided smoothly along close behind Clinton, and passed us, bowing to us gracefully.

"I like Mr. Ward's skating," murmured Kin Carey. "But oh! Kate, do look at Dr. Bartol bringing up the rear; no wonder he's so red in the face, he works so hard. How like a windmill he looks brandishing his long arms!" and she gave a merry little laugh which I'm afraid he heard.

Mattie, always on the side of the injured, stood up bravely for him, and told her cousin in a burst of indignation that she would break his heart, and send him off into a galloping con-

sumption likely as not, if she went on treating him so and flirting with Mr. Ward. "Mr. Ward is very entertaining and fascinating, I dare say," she added, "but I don't believe he's a bit *better* than the doctor, who has the kindest, gentlest heart in the world!"

Corinne took her cousin's lecture coolly and quietly, but I think her vanity was secretly gratified at the idea of having such power over the young physician, and she went on flirting rather the worse for it to see, perhaps, what he would do. The sun was setting, and as we were still some distance from "Bright's" and supper, the gentlemen proposed "towing" us the rest of the way. This I soon found was delightful. No exertion was required on my part, I had only to grasp Clinton's hands firmly and trust myself to him, and he drew me with a rapidity that was exciting, and almost took away my breath, over the canal, which stretched along before us in the soft, golden light of a winter sunset, with its bright crystal floor and border of dark evergreens; in a stillness that was unbroken, except by our merry voices and the ringing of our skates. I liked the being *tete-a-tete* with Clinton, too, and when he exclaimed enthusiastically, "Oh! Kate, isn't this charming? I wish it were fifty miles to Bright's!" I secretly echoed the wish. During a moment's detention, caused by the loosening of one of my skates, Mr. Ward passed us "towing" Kin Carey. As he skated backward, holding her little hands in his, he was talking to her in low, earnest tones, and gazing down at the beautiful face before him, as though for him it were then the only thing in the wide world. Her bonnet had slipped back from her chestnut hair, and showed her face upturned to his, and bright with the loveliest color; her ripe, full lips just parted by her breath; and her soft, dark eyes looking into his with a mingled expression of tenderness and shyness, that, though I did not believe it real, I could not help admiring.

"Poor Mr. Ward!" I thought to myself, "he looks as though he were already madly in love with her. If I were only his good angel, I would whisper in his ear, 'Beware! trust her not, she is fooling thee,' but I'm sure he'd not believe it."

Clinton, whom I had overheard say, that "Kin Carey was the most thorough and bewitching flirt he had ever seen," looked at his cousin with a quiet, significant smile, but only said, "What a dangerous position to be in, skating backward with Kin Carey! she's enough 'to take a man off his feet,' as Moore says of a beautiful Irish lady."

A few minutes after we reached Bright's, and took off our skates. There was a splendid wood fire blazing to welcome us in the warm, brightly lighted, cosy little parlor, and it was with loud and joyful exclamations of delight that we gathered round it on our arrival, and threw off our cloaks and bonnets. As for the supper that was all ready for us, it was delicious, and we were well prepared to do it justice, for skating gives one a wonderful appetite. We were all six of us in the wildest spirits, unless I except Dr. Bartol, whose laugh came, as it seemed to me, not without effort, as he saw Corinne still flirting desperately with Mr. Ward; and the old dining-room rang with our mirth and gay voices. After supper though we quieted down a little, and we girls drew up round the fire and chatted, and lounged luxuriously in the depths of the great arm-chairs in the parlor: while the gentlemen went off for a little while, as they always will, to smoke a cigar.

We all set out for home together in a great carryall belonging to the house, which held three on a seat comfortably. The moon, instead of beaming brightly on us as we had hoped, only peered dimly through heavy masses of clouds, with a pale, ghastly light that seemed to have a corresponding effect on us; for, at the general request, Clinton and Dr. Bartol amused us by telling ghost stories, that were enough to make one's hair stand up on end with fright. Mattie and I, who sat on the front seat with Clinton, drew close to each other in delicious terror, grasping each other's hands under our cloaks, and stealing fearful glances at the fields we passed, when gnarled stumps and leafless trees became, in the darkness, ghastly forms that beckoned hideously to us, or raised their long, fleshless arms despairingly to heaven. When half-way home, we entered a dark, dreary pine wood, where the tall, thick trees stood like sentinels close to the roadside, except where there were openings into the forest, in which was the very blackness of darkness.

"Oh! how gloomy it is in here!" said Corinne, with a little shiver.

Mr. Ward drew her cloak more closely round her, to protect her from the cold, as he said, "It is like forests through which I passed in Spain and Italy, and of which they told me tales that made my blood run cold, of travelers waylaid and murdered in their depths. Ah! Miss Corinne! if we were there now, you might have an opportunity to see how we could fight for you, and *die* for you, when the savage banditti, armed to the teeth, should spring out from behind the trees, seize our 'horses' bridles, sur-

round the carriage with wild, desperate faces, and pointing their pistols at us."

At this very instant a man darted out from among the trees and seized our horses' heads. Mattie and I, wrought up as we were already, screamed with terror, and Corinne clung to Mr. Ward for protection.

"Who's there?" demanded Clinton and Mr. Ward, both at once.

"Dr. Bartol here?" said a high, quavering voice, "Betsy's baby's took very bad with the croup, and she wants the doctor."

"Oh!" said Mattie, heaving a profound sigh of relief, while the rest of us were giving way to shouts of laughter.

"Haven't you got no feelin's? A baby suffering with croup ain't nothin' to laugh at, as I see!" exclaimed the man, angrily.

But it was in vain that we tried to smother our amusement when we discovered who it was that had startled us so, and, the moon coming out of a cloud, revealed to us the long, lank figure and meek face of "Sister Cram"—as the village boys called the half-witted fellow on account of his high, womanish voice—arrayed in a remarkably faded and worn-out wadded dressing-gown, put on over his great-coat to keep him warm, and looking like anything but a fierce, blood-thirsty brigand. He was going to the village, it seemed, for Dr. Bartol, when thinking he heard his voice as the carriage passed him, he saw fit to stop us as I have described. Dr. Bartol left us, and went with him as he did not live far off; but as he got out of the carriage and said Good night, he fixed on Corinne a glance so reproachful that it brought the color to her face, and seemed to surprise and puzzle Mr. Ward, who, I am sure, had no idea that, till he came, Dr. Bartol had regarded himself almost as an accepted lover.

"I never was so frightened in my life," said Mattie. "I expected nothing but that we were all to be robbed, and murdered in cold blood on the spot!"

"And left weltering in our gore till the morning," added Clinton, with a laugh so hearty and contagious that we all joined in it, "and by that terrific, savage-looking Sister Cram! Oh! Mattie."

"I don't care," said Mattie; "you needn't laugh, Clinton, for you know you were startled yourself at first."

"What a pity it is, Mr. Ward, that you didn't have an opportunity to die for us! I'm really afraid you'll never have another chance," said Corinne, looking at Mr. Ward, with her dark eyes full of mischief.

"If we cannot die, we can live for you still," he answered, in a low voice.

The rest of the way home we were as merry as we had been quiet and sober during the first of our drive, and the silence of the night was broken by our gay songs and ringing peals of laughter. We all went skating together many times during the remaining three weeks of the students' vacation. Corinne proved, beyond a doubt, that skating afforded extraordinary facilities for a flirtation. The winning sweetness and confidingness with which, one day, she looked up to Mr. Ward as her support and teacher; the bewitching way in which the next she refused to let him help her at all, and kept him in a perpetual state of anxiety lest she should fall and injure herself, while insisting that she wouldn't rely upon anybody for assistance; the *tele-a-teles* she had with him when they would sit down to rest together, or would manage to get separated from the rest of the party; the coming off, every now and then, of one of her skates, requiring her to stand with her little hand resting for support on his shoulder, while he kneeled and held the little foot which needed adjusting; and the delicious, dreamy languor with which she would throw herself exhausted upon the sofa, on her return home, and with half-closed lips listen, while he sat by her side at her command and talked to her; all this, even in the hands of one less beautiful, could hardly have failed of their effect; and in the case of Mr. Ward seemed only too successful. He was over at her side, anticipating every wish by attentions the most delicate and unobtrusive, his face full of devotion and tenderness, his very voice seeming to become more low and lover-like in its tones when he spoke to her.

The night before Clinton was to return to Cambridge, as we were walking together, I said to him, "I can't help thinking that it is a pity that Kin Carey has added your friend to her list of conquests, he seems so admirable every way, so charming, has such delicacy of feeling and thought, and to be so infatuated with one like Corinne!"

To my surprise Clinton laughed, and said, "I wonder if you wouldn't think your pity wasted if I should tell you of a conversation I had with him last night!"

Of course I asked him to tell me about it.

"You must know, Kate," he answered, with a comical look on his face, "that I had been pitying him just like you. I thought he was wasting the love of his whole heart on one who is vain and incapable of returning such love as his; and I determined, if it were not too late, to

open his eyes to the truth, and save from the bitter disappointment, and blighted hopes, that I was sure would be his fate. So, last night as we were smoking together in the drawing-room after everybody else had gone to bed, I broached the subject cautiously by asking him what he thought of my cousin, watching his face closely for any signs of agitation."

"Handsome little thing," he answered, quietly, puffing away.

"Humph! is that all you think of her?" said I, a little piqued.

He divined my meaning at once, and, raising his eyebrows a little, and taking his cigar from his mouth, he turned round and looked at me with an odd expression, as he said, "You think I'm madly in love with her, Russell? Not at all, I assure you."

I looked incredulous, of course; he saw it, but went on quietly, "I had heard of your cousin's reputation as an accomplished flirt before I came here, and saw at once that she intended to exercise her powers on me. I had not the least objection, of course, and so have humored her to the top of her bent, playing Romeo to her Juliet to the best of my ability. She is certainly a charming person to flirt with, and I'll confess that I've enjoyed the flirtation extremely, but of course my going back to Cambridge will be the end of it. I have not the slightest wish to continue it after my return. But as to *love*, Russell," and his manner changed to deep seriousness, Kate, "I could never love a practised coquet like Miss Carey."

I was astonished at this new view of the case, and a little indignant at having been deceived myself, and will confess, while I could not help acknowledging that it served Corinne right, that I was disappointed somewhat in Mr. Ward; but I only said to Clinton, "Corinne has no idea that she has only been flirted with, I'm sure."

"I suppose not," he answered. "It's the first time she has ever been met with her own weapons."

We missed our pleasant skating companions very much, after their return to Cambridge; Corinne especially found everything dull and spiritless without Mr. Ward, and disappointed, I suspected, that he should go away without making any declaration of love. She was confident, however, that when Clinton returned in March, his friend would come with him. So she looked forward impatiently to March, did not even flirt with Dr. Bartol, and seemed to care for nothing but skating, in which she improved wonderfully. She even got up a charming skating-dress in anticipation of skating again with

Mr. Ward. With his quick eye for beauty he could not have helped admiring her in it, if he could have seen her skating; her little feet flying over the ice; her scarlet dress flowing behind her; her lithe, exquisitely rounded form displayed in a closely-fitting basquine trimmed with fur, and swaying with a motion that was almost voluptuous in its grace; and her bright face, with its laughing lips, and brilliant color, set off by the jauntiest little fur cap with scarlet ribbons that streamed in the wind.

But he did not return with Clinton. Corinne betrayed great surprise and disappointment at first, but after that maintained entire reserve on the subject, never even mentioning his name. I thought she was piqued perhaps, but after awhile concluded that he had entirely passed out of her mind, till one day, when Clinton was telling Mattie and me of Mr. Ward's popularity and brilliant success in Cambridge, I happened to glance at Corinne, and I was startled to see her listening with such intensity of expression, her cheeks burning, even the hand with which she was shading her face trembling violently.

One day, three or four months after this, I received a letter from Clinton—we have been engaged some months now, and are to be married as soon as he has finished his studies at Cambridge—in which he told me of his friend's engagement to a young and very lovely girl in New York. Corinne Carey happening to come in the same afternoon, I told her the news in a careless sort of a way, without thinking she would care at all.

She started a little, but only said, in a constrained manner, "Mr. Ward engaged!" while I went on to tell her what a glowing description of the young lady Clinton had given me. She sat looking out of the window, with her face turned from me all the time I was talking. When I stopped, she rose quietly, and said she must go home; but, as she moved toward the door, I saw her suddenly reel and seize hold of a chair for support. I sprang to her, just in time to save her from falling.

As I laid her gently down on the sofa, with her eyes shut and her face deadly white, and tried to restore her to consciousness, "Don't tell," she said, throwing her arms around me, and looking earnestly into my face, as soon as the faintness had passed away and she could speak.

"No, never!" said I, with tears in my eyes. And that was all we said. Neither of us has ever alluded to it since; and no one else, not even Mattie, suspects the truth. She tries so hard to seem happy and gay, that she deceives

everybody but me; but I can feel an under current of sadness, even when the others think her merriest; and I know that her heart is heavy, and her sorrow all the harder to bear, because of her woman's pride—and I respect her for it—will never let her show it before others. I long sometimes to tell her how much I pity her, but I knew that she would shrink even from my sympathy. I console myself, however, with what I know to be the truth. She is too fickle and volatile naturally to feel deeply long; time, that

heals almost all wounds, will heal hers, I am sure. She will never quite forget the handsome, fascinating Mr. Ward, his graceful devotion, and seeming tenderness; but she will get over her hopeless attachment for him, and be as light-hearted as ever; perhaps even marry, some time or other, Dr. Bartol, who cherishes for her a love as truly poetic and noble, as if he were a high-born genius who could stir the heart of the world with the eloquent story of his love, instead of a poor, homely, awkward village doctor.

HOW FANNY LEE'S PRAYER WAS GRANTED.

BY ANNIE BREWSTER.

"Heart and head beat through the quiet,
Full and heavily, though slower;
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic precieuses of power
Had up-enatched me to the Timeless, then returned me to the Hour."—MRS. BROWNING.

FANNY LEE leaned out of her bedroom window and looked up through the vine branches of the "moon-opened woodbine," whose sweet blossoms rested on her fair, young forehead. The bright moon shot in slyly soft beams, and here and there in the steel blue sky glimmered out the trooping stars.

Fanny drew a long breath. She had just finished reading Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, which lay on the broad window ledge beside her; and in her hand she held "Jane Eyre," which she had taken down from her book-shelves to look over, after she had finished that sorrowful biography, which almost every one wishes had never been written, even those who comprehend it—and very few of those there are—for the honestly indignant woman who wrote it, seems scarcely to take in all the sorrow which she tells with such shuddering sympathy.

Yes, few women—and thank God for His mercy that they are only few—understand and see all the true misery of that life; and this is only when in their own lives—hidden it may be—lies the key, for which they have paid a fiery, costly price; and they lay down the book with contracted hearts and glazed eyes, saying,

"Better have been quiet. What use the telling of it? It does not help one weary-hearted sufferer."

But Fanny did not feel thus.

"A narrow ken
Hath girlhood 'twixt the sun and sward,
We draw the moral afterward—
We feel the gladness then."

The sorrow of that life was beautiful to her, because of its glorious fruit of fame.

"Oh! to write such a book as *Jane Eyre*!" she exclaimed.

And she rested her head on the deep window casing and looked off into the distance, where, between the trees at the foot of the garden, glistened the waters of the winding creek. The surface of the stream, though shining, was unbroken, and on it lay mirrored the exact reflection of the opposite shore—the picturesque outline of some old pine trees, and the tower-

like chimney of a factory, from which streamed a white column of smoke, that rose graciously into the sky, then toppled over, and fell off into feathery bits, floating here and there like tufts of down from a flight of swans—it made a perfect circle that shadow of the reality—as shadows added to the real often do.

The village clock struck one. Fanny did not hear it. Her thoughts were busy with the various sorrows and trials of the romance-like life of that family, who lived life's history solemnly, acted it seriously, and wrote it earnestly.

"But even all that trouble," said the dear, innocent girl with sweet seriousness, which she, in her girlish ignorance, thought was true philosophy and most excellent wisdom; "but even all that trouble seems glorified, and surely not hard to bear, when one possesses the consciousness of such mind-gifts as they all possessed. Yes!" she exclaimed, with that solemn earnestness which seems always to be heard—"yes, I could bear all that she did to be like her. Oh! I should not care how much I had to suffer, if I could only have granted to me such a destiny, such a result!"

And she floated off into dreams and visions of future greatness, while the moon, and stars, and soft waters, and sweet west wind breathed their night-chorus around her. While she was repenting again and again the same solemn declaration, she thought she saw an angel standing beside her. It caused her no surprise, although it had glorious wings that shone in the moonlight with a silvery violet hue, and on its head glittered a circlet as clear and shining as the foam-hells of the little meadow stream, when it danced over the old tree roots in the swamp.

"You could suffer as much, and are willing to pay that price for what she gained?" the form seemed to ask. "Weigh well your answer, for upon it may depend your future life. Such prayers as yours, such declarations, uttered with such earnestness and faith, always reach heaven, and rarely fail to be

granted, when the one who makes the demand has sincerity and courage."

Fanny tried to think; tried honestly to weigh the suffering in the balance against the fame, then replied,

"Yes, I could bear all to be like her."

"This is your belief and wish?" repeated the angel.

"It is!" responded the girl, solemnly.

"So be it," answered the fading form, "I shall see you again when it shall be accomplished."

The village clock struck three, and Fanny awakened. The moon was near its setting, and was struggling with faint, dying light through the heavy masses of clouds which were tossed and rifted by the gusty wind. The garden was dark and gloomy; the water picture had vanished, and the factory smoke that had laid like liquid marble on the sky, was now blowing madly up and flying here and there, as if summoning every storm spirit to the alarm; scarcely a little star could be seen, they had all hidden behind the heavy hillocks of clouds. Fanny felt chilled through and through, and shivering she arose, closed the window, lowered her light, and crept off quietly to bed, thinking much of her very strange dream.

For days, and weeks, and even months it seemed to haunt her; but at last it faded from her memory; and no wonder, for a gay and happy life surrounded her. It was not a life of her own making, for she was neither brilliant nor beautiful on the surface, and, therefore, would never have arrested the fast-flowing current of society long enough to make ripples of admiration around her. But that huge log, wealth, was hers, and she, like a rare, but unknown plant, grew on its decaying bark, at the root of the goodly tree of another's public position, and while the tree rose up stately, and waxed strong, becoming ready for the axe of the workman, her little flower-like life basked in the rich sunlight, and breathed the fragrant shade, and dipped in the brilliant waves that swept around her.

She enjoyed her prosperity to the full. She grew cultured by intercourse, with not only master minds, but with the objects of beauty and luxury that wealth, or distinguished position—which is as powerful as wealth—commands Art as a handmaiden to bestow. Her stand point was in the world, she stood on one of its most dizzy heights, she blended herself with its fashions, she enjoyed its luxuries, and her energies often felt the influence of its soft, subtle crush, while she willingly veiled from

herself all knowledge of its falseness and folly.

But the tree had reached its destined size—the axe was put to its root, and it was cut down, and then, in the rush and hurry that followed, the huge log was dislodged and swept off, and the little flower became known and needed—then followed its real culture for life use.

Death came, followed slowly by sorrows of many kinds: but first the death of those she leaned on and trusted in most. To seek consolation, she visited lands famous in the history of Art and Poesy, and over whose beautiful hills, and in whose glittering atmospheres, seemed to hang resplendent, in shining letters, what she valued most, the names of the great, and the good, and the gifted who had dwelt there.

She visited the grand, old Southern Europe; and as she trod its classic grounds, she lived over in fancy that beautiful Italian world of the far off past—which was everything to those gay Greeks and voluptuous Romans—their glittering pleasures, their mad races, their luxurious baths, their exhibitions at the amphitheatre, their intellectual sensuousness of epicurean meditation or conversation, in beautiful academic groves, where the refined philosophers set themselves apart in all the pride of mental opulence, and said, "Our world is better than the world of other men and women—let us drink our sweet Lotus draught alone and float on;" all this she remembered, and pondered over as one looks on a beautiful picture in a river.

In the midst of her short, luxurious life, in the succeeding season of her first trials, she had often attempted to give utterance to the vague, beautiful thoughts, or "shadows of thoughts" that floated in her mind, like the amethystine mists which hang over Alpine mountains. But she never satisfied herself. She worked with "patience, which means almost power," and had some little success, but it was not a success that pleased her. It seemed to her, also, as if she only

"Played at art, made thrusts with a toy-sword,
Amused the lads and maidens."

She felt she needed something, she knew not what. It was richer color that her sketches wanted. Her pencil had to be dipped deep into her own heart to find the rich flesh tint that would give life to her writings. And yet any one that knew her then would have thought she could not bear much more discipline. Her character seemed tender and yielding; yet it was only the thin layer of soft earth over a hard bed of rock. Her first griefs had almost over-

whelped her, but it was the bowing down that rises up with renewed strength.

The human heart is like a young horse—very restive under the first spur of grief; but it submits at last as to a superior force, when it finds that the evil is unending and inevitable. It softens down its fiery grief, and not only yields, but accepts its griefs quietly; first violent exasperations fall into the exhaustion of despair, or reckless indifference; then follows a courageous calm anxiety; then a still, resolute sadness. Pegasus is reined and bitted and moves on kindly in the harness. If it were not so, the best and truest lives would end before their duty was accomplished—the duty of learning their own life lesson and making it useful to themselves and others.

Troubles thickened, sorrows accumulated; worse than death enveloped her—shame, bitter, mortifying shame. She trod with throbbing anguish over the red-hot plough-shares spread in her path with a mute endurance, and sometimes her innocent, sorrowing wonderment grew Job-like, as it looked on the apparent injustice of her lot. She had always been pure, upright, just, and tender, and as soon as she had awakened to her life work, she lived it in earnest. But her life grew more and more sorrowful. Her straight path of duty had not only common sorrows, it even laid over the misery of others; but she walked it, nevertheless, for her obedient spirit knew no other road.

She showed woman's noblest womanliness in facing quietly and bravely the inevitable. Even those who loved her, gave her only the dark side of love—that other part of the round, which is not lighted by the blessed sun of confidence and understanding—jealousy and mistrust.

Falsehood and slander even attacked her, but she trod down the lies, and walked boldly and with a meek, womanly pride over them—yes, highly and holily; but though her strength seemed like an inspiration, the fang of the evil struck in at her woman-heel, and the mortal misery rose silently, but surely, and gnawed away like a serpent's tooth unseen at her heart, for the wound was that from which the heart never recovers, the falseness, and ridicule, and wrong from those she had trusted in and loved!

Even bitter poverty came, and she had to write for bread, without striving any longer to attain to the height of her former beautiful ambition, fame; and the sorrow and sickening she felt over her works grew greater, for they seemed

"To taste of common grain not grapes."

She drank deep of every human ill. She fulfilled Epictetus' epitaph,

"Poor, and sick in body—but beloved by the gods."

Human power to work injustice, and human feebleness to right the wrong seemed unending; and at last the oppressed humanity within her hopelessly turned its glazed, despairing eyes to heaven for relief, and it came. She laid her down to die in silence, without, as she said to herself, having writ one book, one living line, whose sound could catch, for one instant, the world's ear.

A few friends—very few—stood near her, and as one closed her blank gazing eyes, after the soul had left the poor body, she said,

"We must not mourn for her—at last she is at rest."

"Not a tear must o'er her fall—
He giveth His beloved sleep."

And they all turned away from the silent, forlorn clay with wonder in their thoughts, and gazing at each other unuttered questionings, while they strove hurriedly to pick up their own interrupted life-thread.

As her released spirit soared up from the worn-out body, she saw beside her the same shadowy form that had visited her on that sweet moonlight night of her far off youth.

"I told you you should see me again, when all should be accomplished," it said. "Look!"

She turned and looked back on her own former little world. She saw there her books famous, and her life that had been so dark and sorrowful, brightened and ornamented with every garland and gift of praise that tardy fame could bestow. She leaned against the angel's silvery violet-hued wing, and gazed from this earthly fame on to a little heap of dust, her poor earthly body. She remembered all the throbbing pain it had endured, the aching horror that had dwelt in that brain. She turned to the angel pleadingly, and said in a tone of self-reproach,

"Was it worth all that sorrow?"

"No!" replied the form, "it was not. But a Wise Power directs all earthly desires, when innocently erring, to a right end. You asked for earthly fame with honest, enthusiastic ignorance; but you asked for it influenced by noble motives. You have gained it. You see how worthless it is. But in working out that, you have gained a greater thing, this——"

"Fanny! Fanny! are you sleeping yet?"

The village clock struck eight as her mother's voice aroused her, and from the open window came in the broad, warm light of the mid-

summer sun, the hot hum of busy insects, and the shrill song of her bird.

"You naughty girl," said her mother, as in pushing back the shutter some books fell to the floor, "here on your window ledge is 'Jane Eyre' and 'Mrs. Gaskell.' You were reading late last night. Shame on you! I thought you promised to be up early, and have the jelly made and those peaches candied before I should be awake."

Fanny sprang out on the rug, and throwing her arms around her provoked, but indulgent mother's neck, said in a low, startled voice,

"Oh! I have had such a dream!"

"To be sure you have had a dream. All young girls who sit up late over novels do have dreams," replied her mother, hastily. "But never mind your dream. Plunge into that bath I have drawn for you, and let the fresh, cool water waken you up. In a half hour the prayer bell will ring, and do try to be ready."

"But mother," said the half-awakened girl, "just wait—and let me tell you—I shall forget it all."

"Oh! I have no time to listen to your dreams, my child. You know your father has to leave for S— at half-past nine, and I have his carpet-bag to pack. By the time you are as old as I am, my daughter, you will learn to pay little attention to novels, and less to dreams, or I am much mistaken."

And she closed the bedroom door with a fresh animated injunction to "make haste."

Fanny took her mother's advice in regard to the bath at least. Make haste she could not, for she was in such a dreamy state, that her spirit seemed only half-retained to her body, and she went through her dressing mechanically, and in a vague, mystified wonderment. As she wound the massive braids of her rich golden brown hair around her head, she looked dreamily out of the window on the waters of the creek that were now dancing merrily along, breaking into a million sparkles under the brilliant morning sunbeams, and thought of her strange, vivid, life-like vision, for dream she could not call it. Her senses grew gradually stronger and stronger under the invigorating influence of cold water and fresh air, and as she attempted to dwell on the mysterious memory, it seemed to recede farther and farther off, and at last

"Fade into the light of common day."

But a meek stillness came over her, and when she knelt at the morning prayers, a voice went up from her heart asking for a blessing on the present, while her thoughts turned prayerfully away from all wishes and questionings for the future.

And that prayer was also heard.

THE RULING PASSION.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

[Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1860, by Mrs. Ann S. Stephens, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the Southern District of New York.]

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE minister's spinning bee created a world of wholesome excitement in Norwich; every household was awake and in action. Men and women who had half grudgingly laid out a portion of their goods in the beginning, grew more and more liberal as the general enthusiasm increased, and doubled their gifts cheerfully when the time for decision came.

Up to the last day, and late at night, spinning-wheels were in full run, and the buzz of spindles and whir of flyers, filled the calm stillness long after the neighborhood was usually in bed.

There was something refreshing and genial in all this stir of benevolence, which we of the nineteenth century can never know; for that excitement which springs from good hearts, and looks to heaven for its fruition, has sunk into a dull leaden sort of duty in these days. Men would smile were we to speak of them in connection with recreation and amusement. But in the old times when going out to tea, once a month, was considered relaxation enough for a respectable family, and a quilting frolic partook of dissipation, this church gathering had all the zest of a great festival—a festival in which all shared as guests, and all figured as hosts and hostesses.

In a neighborhood where respectable people went to bed, with religious punctuality, at nine o'clock, and children were invariably housed at sunset, a festival of this importance must commence in the afternoon; for it was an unusual approach toward dissipation when the solemn hilarity extended into the dark hours.

Thus, directly after the general twelve o'clock dinner, preparations commenced in each household for the minister's gathering. Wagons, wheeled from under their sheds, were filled with splint-bottomed chairs for the elders, and milking-stools for the little folks. In some instances plain boards were passed from one side of the conveyance to the other, forming rude benches, on which whole families were to be crowded in rows and jolted cosily to town.

In-doors there was a general commotion—a rushing to and fro for Sunday clothes. Combs and brushes flew from hand to hand; there was a continual splash of water in the back porches; while two or three laid claim to each wash-bowl at once; and every crash towel in the neighborhood made constant evolutions on their rollers behind the door, as newly-washed claimants seized upon them. Children forgot to cry when the tangles were combed out of their elf locks; and pretty girls plumed themselves like birds before the tiny looking-glasses, garlanded with birds' eggs, which hung in the best room, or best corner of every dwelling.

An hour later, and you could scarcely see a wreath of smoke from any chimney within sight of Norwich. Ashes were raked over the embers of every hearth; the latch-string was drawn in at the cabin doors: and the hush of still life hung around each farm and homestead.

But there was bustle and clatter enough along the roads leading downward. Cheerful voices, free ringing mirth, and sometimes shouts of laughter, resounded from wagon to wagon as one passed another, or struggled to keep up. This innocent riot came from the rear of each wagon, where the youngsters were located. Sometimes it was sternly checked by the head of the concern, who could not help being impressed by this rare holiday as if it had been the Sabbath; but the mirth was sure to break out again in titters and gurgling bursts of laughter, at which the grim father would half-smile as it gradually dawned upon him that mirth, on this occasion, was seemly, and, in due bounds, to be forgiven.

Thus the bright day was cheerful with rattling wheels, tramping horses, and human joyousness, as the church members gathered around their minister. For that one day the minister could hardly be considered as the master of his own house, but rather as an honored guest, in whom each member held a certain amount of very precious property. His wife, a fair and faded woman, who revered her husband as a saint, and loved her children with more of

devotion than her strict ideas of worship should have permitted, for this one day shared his glory without stint. The throng of active, listening women that filled her house, persisted in lifting her on the same pedestal with her helpmate, there to be caressed and ministered to. For one day that dwelling was in the hands of the church; the walls of each room were draped with evergreens and blossoming branches; the white curtains were garlanded back from the windows; the beams that ran heavily across each ceiling became massive wreaths glowing with flowers. Back of the house, a fine apple orchard covered one of those natural terraces which make the city of Norwich so beautiful. Here the birds were singing vigorously, and hopping from limb to limb in a state of melodious excitement. They seemed to understand that a scene of that kind was not to be witnessed every day of the year, and resolved to make the most of it.

Wagon after wagon unloaded itself before the minister's dwelling for an hour or so after the committee of females had taken possession. First the living occupants descended, or were lifted to the ground; then baskets were dragged out from under the seats and handed carefully to the deacons, who muttered deep thanksgiving for each gift as it came. It was wonderful, the variety of offerings presented at that door: masses of broadside pork, dripping with the brine from which they had been taken; sacks of potatoes, pots of butter, and fine round cheeses; jars of preserves, rich with a taste of maple sugar; young chickens, with their legs tied together, and struggling to be free; sucking pigs shackled in like manner, but taking their thralldom philosophically, rooting in the bottom of the wagon when let alone, and only giving out a shrill squeal or two when in a state of active transmigration, to the minister's pig-pen, under the deacon's arm.

Before sunset the minister was indeed blessed "in his casket and his store." His cellar was teeming with provisions; quantities of yarn lay heaped in the garret; strange hens cackled around the house, calling for mates that remained in the distant barn-yards; a roll of new rag carpet stood on end in the passage: indeed the kind hearts of his brethren were visible everywhere.

Among the last that drove up that day was Leonard and his family. Two milk-pails covered with homespun napkins white as snow were lifted from the wagon; then came a little bundle of yarn, such as the delicate fingers of Amy alone could spin; and at last appeared from

under the front seat a bright, new milk-pan, from which the contents rounded up like an Indian mound, but could only be guessed at from under the glossy linen pinned smoothly over it.

When all these valuables were lifted to the ground, Mrs. Leonard shook out the skirt of her chintz dress, and cast a look of righteous deference around as she followed her husband into the house. She had seen the pails carried in, and stood waiting till the milk-pan was circled by his arms, and then she took her line of march into the room in which the supper-table was laid out.

The women, who composed the committee of arrangements, were busy about the table arranging the various dishes, and scattering glassesful of flowers among them. There was a slight bustle among them when Mrs. Leonard came in, with her face in a glow, and her vigilant eyes searching the glances that invariably recoiled from hers.

"Here," she said, unpinning the napkin, and lifting it between her thumb and finger, while an enormous chicken-pie was revealed swelling up from the pan—"here is a little of something for the table, sisters. Perhaps I expected that some of you might have given me an idea of what would be wanted most; you may have a dozen nicer pies than this, but it ain't my fault, any how."

As she spoke, Mrs. Leonard gave a triumphant glance over the table. Two or three pies were certainly there, but none with that faultless curve of crust, or the delicate bordering of keywork on the edge. In their flatter foundations they looked mean and common-place by the side of her portly offering.

"It isn't anything to boast of, I own that," she said, glowing all over with her triumph, "but perhaps they'll manage to worry it down if they get right hungry. Then you'll find some doughnuts and what not in the pails, but that's of no consequence," she added, giving her plump hand a magnificent wave toward the milk-pails, "when one isn't consulted about things it's difficult knowing what to fix up. When we had a bee in this house before, I reckon folks knew what was wanted without being left to guess at it."

The sisters of the committee looked askance at the mammoth pie and at each other. There was evidently something wrong about Mrs. Leonard or her contribution, which they did not feel quite capable of managing—her own self-praise took them by surprise.

Finally a gentle voiced woman came forward, and removed the pie to the head of the table,

where the minister was to preside. Then, with a quiet glance at the sisters, she gathered up the glasses and broken mugs filled with flowers, and placed them around it, forming a pavilion of flowers, under which the mammoth pastry swelled up with luscious richness.

This took Mrs. Leonard by surprise; the color mounted to her forehead, and her plump lips began to quiver.

"Amy has a little present, too," she said, striving to hide the gentle emotion that was sending tears close to her eyes. "There may be finer yarn than she has spun for the minister brought in, but I can't quite believe it without seeing. You'll find the bundle marked A. L. in the entry way; but, Amy, daughter Amy, jest bring the diaper in here, won't you, Amy?"

She waited a little with her eyes on the door; but it was some minutes before Amy Leonard came in with a parcel in her hand.

"Here," said Mrs. Leonard, "here is something that I defy anybody to say isn't worth while. If I was on the committee, as I was years and years before this, my opinion'd be worth something, maybe; but as it is, I reckon you'll find it tough work to match this ere piece of diaper in all Norwich, to say nothing of the hull state of Connecticut. Look a here now, if you please, every inch of it spun, and wove, and hetcheled, and corded by Amy's own hands. There!"

Mrs. Leonard had broken off now and then, to bite at the string which held the parcel that she took eagerly from her daughter and began to unfold. When the last emphatic word left her lips, a square of pure linen fluttered out from her two hands and fell over the back of a chair, white and glossy as crusted snow.

"Yes, ladies, look, it'll bear examining, the pattern is 'doors and winders,' the linen—but then you have eyes and can see what that is for yourselves. The flax was raised in our home lot at the back door. When it was all in bloom, Amy used to look out and watch it a bending under the wind, while the blue flowers went twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, in the sunshine, and the long, green stalks bent altogether in waves just as the water sweeps over a mill-dam. You never did see such flax! some of it was a full yard and a quarter long, and so thick. Well, that sort of put the idea in my head, the blue flowers always brought up Amy's eyes when she said her prayers at my knee, they looked up to heaven in the same innocent way; the poor girl has been a good deal out of sorts since then. I took an idea that she should weave some of that flax for the service of the Lord; she shirked up

when I mentioned it; and when Leonard got in the flax, the choice handfuls were laid aside for Amy. I raly think the child hasn't smiled right heartily since last fall, except when she was doing this work. And now that it's all spread out 'fore you, ain't this a cloth that will set out the table on communion days with edification to the members?"

Mrs. Leonard had capped the climax of her triumph here, and stood holding up a corner of the cloth daintily between her thumb and finger, challenging the whole society with her eyes to produce anything like that. Amy had shrunk back, blushing painfully as the ladies of the committee turned their eyes from her mother to her, uncertain how to act or what to say. But at last the housewifely love of good linen overcame all other feelings. They gathered around the table-cloth, examined its texture, its whiteness, and its fringed edges, headed with triple rows of hem-stitch, which made it the most perfect specimen of "home-made" that they had ever seen.

"It's a lovely piece of work, Mrs. Leonard, no wonder you are proud of it," said the gentle sister, who had taken such generous charge of the pie.

"Proud! me proud! Oh! nothing like it," cried Mrs. Leonard, smoothing down her dress as if it had been plumage on which too much sunshine was falling. "It's only a humble offering, with good wishes wove in like a pattern, and whitened with dew, which, as the minister said, 'falls like charity, and works, you can't see how, but like a blessing in the end.' When that 'ere cloth is spread out on the communion table, sisters, and the unleavened bread is set out on it, with pure wine in the silver tankard, then, sisters, perhaps you'll be called on to remember one as has stood amongst you breast to breast, and working hand to hand in every committee till this, when she's forgotten and left out; not knowing why, and—and——"

Here the good woman broke down, for her eyes and voice were so full of tears that she could not utter another word.

The women who were examining the communion cloth looked at each other perplexed, and a little conscience-stricken; while Amy drew close to her mother, and stood with one hand slightly grasping the skirt of her dress as if wishing to draw her away. Without looking directly at her, the women knew that she was pale, and that her hand trembled like a leaf in its hold on the dress.

"Mother, oh! mother!" whispered the poor girl.

"Never mind," cried Mrs. Leonard, winking the tears away with a quick motion of the eyelids, and lifting her head with a prompt resumption of dignity—"never mind, daughter, it isn't no shame to have feelings—quite the contrary; but these as hasn't any to be troubled with mayn't understand 'em: so you're right. Perhaps the committee will tell us if your humble present'll be acceptable?"

The women laid down the table-cloth at this, and looked at one another without speaking a word.

Then the same gentle Christian who had twice before shed her grace upon the scene, came forward, and, taking the cloth, began to fold it.

"It is a free gift to the Lord," she said, looking upon her sisters with sweet gravity; "pure and beautiful, as sister Leonard says. It reminds us of old ties, and that all our acts should be done mercifully and in charity to each other. Amy Leonard, we thank you for this proof that you have not forsaken the society."

"I!" gasped Amy, "I! No, no."

She was so white, and the look in her eyes so appealing, that a sentiment of womanly compassion arose in the hearts of the committee. Then they murmured the thanks that had been withheld so long for what was certainly the most beautiful gift brought to the gathering that day.

Amy heard them with a crimson cheek and drooping eyes; while Mrs. Leonard, ashamed of that outbreak of tears which had revealed the mortification at her heart, turned away, and went in search of some one whom she knew outside of the committee, whose demeanor was, on second thought, both strange and unsatisfactory to her frank nature. The looks they had cast at, rather than upon, Amy; the sort of compassionate way in which her gifts had been received, had a meaning which she could not fathom. She felt like an alien in the society of which she had been a leading member for years.

Amy followed her mother in silence. Not a vestige of color was left on her face; and she looked drearily around upon her old playmates and friends, as if afraid of them.

The house being small, most of the minister's guests made their way into the orchard, where a carpet of the freshest grass lay invitingly beneath the tent-like trees. It was a lovely night, the thick, green foliage, through which glimpses of the sky broke in gleams of azure and sunshine; the fruit, just out of blossom, studding the leaves; and the riot of bird-songs trembling

up through the branches. Through all this men, women, and children wandered pleasantly to and fro, carrying their innocent enjoyment everywhere, as the sons of Adam might have thronged Eden had no sin driven them forth to work and suffer. Here and there whole families were grouped beneath the branches: the women, in their scarlet short cloaks and gorgeous dresses, forming pictures all unconsciously from the natural grouping into which they fell, and from a strong contrast of colors; the men filling up each idea with their picturesque strength.

As Mrs. Leonard and her daughter descended into the orchard, they saw nothing but old friends and neighbors, passing them, or grouped under the trees; yet no one came near them, and, instead of the eager gestures by which others were invited to join this group or another, they were permitted to walk down the footpath to its termination without being addressed by more than a distant inquiry after their health.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Leonard, leaning against the rail fence as they reached the foot of the orchard, "I wonder where Mrs. Arnold can be? Have you seen Hannah anywhere about, Amy?"

"No, mother," answered Amy, in a very low voice.

"Nor any of the Arnolds? That's strange. I wish we could find some of the old friends. Oh! here comes Hagar!"

Amy lifted her heavy eyes and saw Hagar in the next field, coming toward the orchard, with a heavy basket on her arm. She saw Mrs. Leonard and Amy by the fence, and made toward them.

"So here you is, Miss Leonard, 'joying yourself like the rest on 'em. Sakes alive! what a heap of people! Well, how do ye do to hum?"

Hagar made these inquiries while she lifted a basket, which she had carried on her arm, to the fence, where she balanced it before attempting to mount the rails.

"Now," she said, descending on the other side, and setting her basket on the grass, "I'm just tired out a-worrying along with this basket all the way from hum. If it hadn't been for the credit of the family I wouldn't a come, no how."

"But isn't Miss Arnold a-coming?" questioned Mrs. Leonard.

Hagar drew close to her, and answered, in a low, confidential voice,

"I know you're a friend to the family, Miss Leonard, and so I can speak out, for once. Miss

Arnold, nor Hannah, nor the old man, nor nobody, is coming here 'cept myself; and I got away superstitiously. There they are, working away for dear life, just as if nothing was going on. Don't say a word 'bout it, Miss Leonard, but the goings-on at the farm is enough to break yer heart, and nobody seems ter mind it but me. Not a hank of yarn nor a yard of cloth went out of that house for the minister's bee; no butter, no nothing. Gracious knows what has come over the folks! everything sold that can be raked and scraped; scrimping here, scrimping there, and all coming on at once. It's no use. I can't understand it."

"Then Mrs. Arnold isn't coming, Hagar?"

"No, she's setting there in the house, meek as Moses, allowing the hull family to be disgraced, as it would be but for me, but all along I've kinder 'spected what ed come and took steps agin it; so when the eggs came in from the barn, and the butter was put away to sell, I've kinder took a little and hid away for this 'casion. Last night I sot up and had a baking all to myself, and the colored pusson as thinks it a privilege to help me 'stain the character of the family. So here's a few biscuit and a crock of butter, with a dozen eggs, and a little jar of peach presarves, which the committee will just take in and save us from 'larnal disgrace. I didn't say nothing 'bout it to Miss Arnold, only asked to come over and see how things went on; but she 'spected, I reckon, for ses she, 'Yes, Hagar, and give the minister's family my best love, and tell 'em that our hearts are with the society if we ain't there in pusson.' Then Hannah, she run up stairs, and came down with some yarn socks as she'd been a knitting with these cro piller-cases, and towels, and ses she, 'Hagar,' ses she, 'these is mine, and there can't be no harm in giving 'em to the minister: it seems hard not to send anything.' Then I jest lifted the kiver from this 'cro basket and gave her a peep, at which she shook her head, blushing up, and says she, 'Oh! Hagar!' and says I, 'Trust one pusson to take care of the repertation of this old homestead. It aint't a-going to sink no lower now, I tell you.'"

"But what is it all about?" inquired Mrs. Leonard, surprised by this insight into the management of her neighbor's household. "What has happened? Mr. Arnold is well to do in the world. Why shouldn't he—"

"Oh! don't ask nothing of me," cried Hagar, breaking in with a wave of the hand. "My 'pinion is, that when you choke off one wickedness, something mean and sneaking is sartin to creep into its place. I say nothing; but if a

man must either drink or scrimp, let him drink—let him drink."

"But you have done pretty well, Hagar," said Amy, putting in her gentle voice, and lifting her sweet eyes to the face of her old friend. "Nobody can complain that you have not brought enough, especially with dear Hannah's linen."

"Yes, young Missus, there it is. But why should that chile be 'bliged to give up them beautiful piller-cases as was sot aside for her setting out, only because everything is sold out of the house afore it comes in? Miss Arnold was rally cut up about it, and ses she, 'Hannah, that linen has been in the family so long, hadn't you better think it over a little?' I rally felt sorry for the Missus when she said this, she seemed so down-hearted; but, Hannah, she blushed like a rosy, and says she,

"Never mind, mother, it won't be of much consequence, you know. Any setting out I can have isn't likely to count with him."

"I 'clare, Miss Leonard, you never saw a face so red as hers was when she gave her mother this answer; a hollyhock's nothing to it."

"But who did she mean, Hagar? Who could she mean by *he*?" cried Mrs. Leonard, eagerly, plunging with all her soul into the gossip of which the slave was ripe.

"Who! why goodness gracious! Who but he that is riding along the road yonder as independent as a wood-sawyer. Did you ever! Speak ob de debble, and he's sartin to come—that's a Scriptor saying and de truf, if truf ever was preached. Yes, there he turns up the road to the humstead—yes, yes, he's beginning to canter now, in a mighty hurry to get there; and she with nothing but her ruffled short-gown and blue petticoat on. Oh! massy, what a fuss there will be!"

As Mrs. Leonard and Amy turned their look down the road where a horseman was riding, full gallop, toward the Arnold farm, Hagar gathered up her basket and marched off toward the house, muttering,

"What a fix they will be in! nothing ready, and Hagar gone. Well, I'll just 'deem de character ob de family as I 'longs to, and go hum. Sure enough, she looks purty as a pink in that white short-gown; and mebbey she'll see him a-coming time enough to slick up in her best; but when dis chile is away from hum, there's no calkerlating what may turn up."

"Who is it?" inquired Mrs. Leonard, following the horseman with her eyes. "Who can it be? Not Bonedict!"

A scream almost broke from Amy's lips. She

clung to the fence, pulling herself up by both hands, and searching the road with her great, wild eyes.

"No!" she said, dropping down to the grass again with a sigh that was half a moan. "It—it is the French gentleman."

"Now!" exclaimed Mrs. Leonard, glowing all over with a new discovery—"now I'll bet two cookies that I understand the whole thing. The Frenchman is arter Hannah Arnold, and that's whut kept him and his sister so long at the farm last winter; I knew from the fust there was nothing between him and the gal, or her feathers. What fools we have been not to think of this long ago!"

"Do you think so, mother?" said Amy, with a wild light in her eyes.

"Do I think so! Why, isn't it as clear as crystal? The Frenchman is rich as all out-doors, and that would be enough for Ben, who loves money better than his life; besides, that accounts for all the pinching and saving that Hagar tells about. The Arnolds want to give their only daughter a setting out worth while, and I like 'em for it; these French people shouldn't have all the glory on their side."

"Mother, this man will have seen Benedict. He—he can tell us something," said Amy, grasping nervously at her mother's dress. "We shall hear—we shall be sure to hear."

"Yes, yes; we'll ride round that way and have a chat with the Arnolds."

"You and father; yes, that will be best. But I will walk toward home."

"No. What would be the use? You that can't walk a rod without getting out of breath."

"But, mother, I cannot go to the farm!"

"Well, well, your father will manage it in the morning for us, there's no hurry."

Amy gasped for breath, evidently unable to utter the wishes that struggled in her bosom.

"Come, come, don't look so down-hearted," said the mother, cheerfully; "perhaps we'll all go over to tea while he's here."

A low moan broke from Amy's lips, but she did not speak again; and her mother moved on quite unconscious of the agitation that shook that young frame and blanched her face, till it was sad to look upon.

They went into the house again, where the minister met them with his grave and pleasant welcome. Mrs. Leonard was not gifted with the keen sensibility which would have discovered something unusual in his manner; and Amy was too much occupied with the wild thoughts crowding upon her to heed anything that required close observation. While her mother

was talking with the minister, and giving side thrusts at the committee after her prompt fashion, Amy stole away, and searched the gay company till she found herself in the kitchen, to which Hagar had betaken herself.

Several of the committee were busy in this wing of the house; and Hagar, after depositing her donation, was engaged in explaining why no other member of the Arnold family was present.

"Yer see, our folks has been 'specting company ebber so long, and dere's been no end ter de baking, and scrubbing, and sich like, as has been undertook on dat account. De little offering, as I has de pleasure to descent, is jest what we could pick up in a hurry from de 'bundance ob de 'casion. As for de pillar-cases and sich like, my young Missus jest sent 'em to satisfy de sisters dat dey wasn't forgot, and never would be in any grand fortune dat might fall upon her; but circumstances ob a delicate natur, which nobody was to speak ob on no account, had kept her away from de spinning-wheel and loom, so she only sent what was handy in order to 'spress her good will."

Those who listened to Hagar, had no idea that her grandiloquence was assumed in order to cover what she keenly felt to be the poverty of her donation; and they were a good deal impressed by the hints of present abundance and coming greatness, which she threw out on the strength of her own vague conjectures alone. But all this gave Amy a gleam of comfort, as it went to prove the truth of her mother's belief regarding the young Frenchman and Hannah Arnold. She stole timidly behind Hagar, and whispering that she wished to speak with her in the orchard, went away and waited by the path till her humble friend should come out. She had no inclination to join any of the young people who were roaming under the trees, but walked along the outskirts of the orchard, peering anxiously through the branches in fear that Hagar might pass without seeing her.

After a little, she saw the slave, with her empty basket, coming through the back door of the house and descending the footpath. With a quickened breath, the young creature glided along the fence, and stood in the path just where it crossed into the neighboring lot.

"Hagar!"

"Wal, what am it, young Missus? Jest speak out, for I'es in a hurry to get hum."

"Hagar!"

"Wal, agin; what am it?"

This time Hagar spoke a little impatiently, and cast eager glances at the fence as if she longed to be over.

"Nothing, Hagar; don't be impatient. Only I—I should like to hear from the people in New Haven."

"What, yer cousin?"

"No, she is well enough; but this French gentleman. Is he really going to marry Hannah? You can trust me, Hagar, I won't breathe it to a mortal soul."

"Why, how earnest you seem about it. Yes, remember I don't speak from a dead sartinty, but it's my belief that it'll be a match, and that fore long, too; why this is the fourth time he's been here since Christmas."

"The fourth time! Ah! me, and I never knew it—never dreamed that there was any chance of hearing from him!" murmured Amy, with tears in her voice.

"Hearing from *him*! What does yer mean by *him*?"

"Benedict, you know, Hagar, I haven't heard a syllable about him for months; and—and we used to go to school together. Don't you remember it, Hagar, Benedict, and Hannah, and I?"

"Yes," said Hagar, looking hard at the fence, and pressing her thick lips together, "yes, I remember 'bout it, sure enough."

"Ah! I knew you would, good Hagar; and how we all went blackberrying together, ever so long ago; you went to take care of us."

"Yes, I remember 'bout that, too, and how when Ben had eat up his berries—he was an orful greedy critter, our Ben—you'd go and pour the blackberries out of yer own basket and fill his'n up ter the brim; many a scolding you've got for coming hum short, when that big boy got credit for yer work! Yes, yes, I remember more'en people think, perhaps."

"Then you remember that I always loved you, Hagar?"

"Yes, yes, I don't deny nothing ob that," answered the slave, casting tender glances at the agitated girl.

"And how I flung a big stone at the snake that wanted to bite you?" pleaded Amy.

"Wal, it olers kinder seemed ter me as if that snake would a made for our Ben if he'd been let alone, but the way yer went at him was clear grit, any how. Yes, yes, one don't forget a thing like that in a hurry!"

"Well, then, Hagar, you know one never forgets an old school-fellow; and I've a great favor to ask, Hagar, you won't refuse it, promise that?" persisted the poor young thing, all in a shiver of excitement.

"Wal, now I don't know 'bout that, jest givo an idee of what it is," said Hagar, pursing

up her mouth, and turning her head on one side.

Amy grew desperate. She clasped her hands hard together under her short cloak, and spoke out rapidly as one speaks in a fever,

"I want to hear from him, my old school-fellow, Benedict Arnold, and nobody tells me a word. This young Frenchman has seen him, I am sure, perhaps he brings a letter, or something; he would think it strange if I asked, but you can find out what I want to know—all about him, Hagar—if he is well. What he is doing—if he ever talks of his old friends in Norwich; and ask, dear, dear Hagar, if he—that is, if this young French gentleman's sister is in New Haven yet? Perhaps she's married to some great nobleman by this time; I hope so, don't you, Hagar? Nothing but a grand, rich man would be a match for her, you know. Will you ask these questions now, just as if you wanted to know about him for your own self? I wouldn't ask it, but I haven't another friend in the wide, wide world that can help me; only you, Hagar—only you."

There was something so pathetic in the girl's voice, and in the pleading of her look, that Hagar began to sniff the air and wink her eyelids violently, a sure sign that she would have liked to cry, but had resolved to maintain herself against every attack of weakness.

"You'll do this for me, Hagar?"

"Why, of course, I will; what's the use of making sich a touzo all 'bout nothing! I thought you was a-going ter ask me to take some trouble. Wal, now, don't go to crying; next time I come across you, see if I don't tell all 'bout them New Haven folks."

"Oh! not till then? Ask the moment you get home. Come back here and tell me—I cannot wait."

"What, here! me come back? What on arth has got into the gal?"

"Oh! Hagar, I am so anxious, my heart aches so—dear soul go—go quick! Who knows what good news you will bring?—don't look at me so—but have a little pity!"

"But I can't do it, there! The tea has to be got."

"Ah! now you are cross, Hagar; you are like all the rest, and want to put me away."

"No, I don't!"

"But you see how anxious I am, and won't come back to help me. Look here, old friend, I've got four silver shillings in this purse, only find out what I want and come right back; you shall take them now, I can trust you."

"No, I won't! Put the puss back into yer

bosom, Amy; I ain't so white as some folks, but—wal, never mind—good-by! 'Fore sunset you'll find me here in the crook of this fence as large as life."

Amy smiled one of her old sunny smiles, that gave back the lost beauty to her face. As Hagar was mounting the fence, she seized her by the dress.

"Oh! Hagar, you are so kind! Perhaps it will be good news that you bring. If Hannah is married soon, *he* may come to the wedding! If he does—if they tell you that, Hagar, I'll give you the gold ear-rings grandmother left me, all pure gold, and as large round as a crown piece; don't shake your head, oh! I shall be so glad to give them to you. But do hurry back!"

"Well, well, let me go then, I'll be back sure enough; not for the ear-rings, but—but——"

Amy did not hear the rest, for the negress walked off with long strides till the trees hid her from sight. Twice she looked back, but only to see those wild, mournful eyes following her, oh! so anxiously.

After she got out of sight, Hagar began to walk more heavily; then she stood still, as if struck by some overpowering thought, staggered with the pain of it for a moment, and set down on a stump by the way side, where she burst into a hearty cry. At last she got up, wiped her face with a corner of her cotton shawl and went toward home.

"Yes," she muttered, "I'll stand by her through thick and thin, and so shall every colored pusson as wants the honor ob my 'quaintance. Let de white folks peek her to death if they've a mind to, but as for me—well, it's wicked to cuss anybody; but de blood riles up from de bottom ob my berry heart when I think that young feller was broughten up under the same ruff wid a 'spectable pusson like me, nussed at his mother's bussum like any odder baby."

Thus muttering to herself, Hagar went on her way home. Amy watched by the fence so long as a glimpse could be caught of her gorgeous calico dress; then she went back to the house with something of animation in her face. For two hours she could not expect Hagar back again, meantime she must hide herself in the orchard, or join with the crowd: the voice of her mother calling her decided the question. She went into the house with a faint glow on her cheek, for at her age hope is quick to revive, trample its bright blossoms down as you will.

"Yes, yes, he has been wanting for this to

happen; at his sister's wedding all will be well." Thus she half-murmured, half-thought, on her way up the orchard.

Under one of the vast tent-like trees nearest the house, a rustic table was being spread for the young folks. Here a bery of fair girls was busy, darting in and out under the branches and through the back door, eagerly spreading the feast. One of the girls called to Amy as she went up the footpath,

"Amy, Amy Leonard, you lazy thing! come and help set the table! What on earth are you about?"

A quick thrill ran through that young heart. She was not avoided, that was all a fancy, the girls loved her as well as ever. Amy turned, with the glow of these thoughts on her face, and joined the innocent revelers.

"I am sorry; true enough, why should one play, and the rest work? Thank you, Nancy Clark! Now what shall I set about first?"

"Go and coax your mother to send out some of her nice things for us, it isn't fair for them to take everything for the minister's table."

"Yes, yes, I'll do it," cried Amy, grateful for this cheering notice.

"Hunt up a pitcher, Amy, and hook some of their roses, if you get a chance; we'll have a flower-pot that'll take theirs down, mind that."

"I left some hemlock tops and lots of flowers in the wagon," said Amy, running off.

Directly she came back with her arms full of evergreens and branches of forest flowers, with garlands of ground pine trailing on the grass as she walked. The young girls set up a shout as she appeared half-buried in masses of green.

"Oh! come on, come on," cried Nancy Clark, flinging the branches, east at her feet, right and left, "here's oceans of flowers! We'll have a border all round the table-cloth and flower-pots at both ends; work away—work away!"

There was instant and joyous obedience to this behest. Every hand was at work twining flowers among the green spray, and weaving garlands that, united together, soon formed a sumptuous wreath around the white drapery of the table.

"Now," cried Nancy Clark, crowding masses of flowers into a great stone pitcher half sunk in the grass, "some one come help me lift this to its place, and then we shall pull an even yoke with the best of 'em."

A dozen hands were ready to aid her, and directly a glowing bower of wild blossoms marked one end of the festal board.

"Now who is to ask a blessing? The minister says, we may choose any one we like.

Which shall it be, Dr. Blake or Amy Leonard's father?"

"Oh! Mr. Leonard—Mr. Leonard, Amy's father! Didn't she bring the flowers?"

The tears sprang to Amy's eyes. It was sweet to be called out of her terrible depression by the warm-hearted clamor.

"Why, look at Amy—only think, she's crying!" said one of the girls.

"No, I'm not—it was because this kindness came so suddenly. Then there's Dr. Blake."

"Well, well," cried Nancy Clark, who was a charming leader in everything, "Mr. Leonard shall ask the blessing, and Dr. Blake can return thanks!"

"Yes, yes, Nancy's hit the mark this time! Now hurry up, hurry up, or the old folks'll get ahead of us!" was the general cry.

It was one of the prettiest sights in the world, that crowd of blooming girls, hurrying to and fro in eager haste to keep up with their elders. Now and then, a grave matron would step to the door-stone and take a survey of the scene, affecting a little jealousy, and venturing on a demure rebuke of so much mirth; but this only checked the laughter for a moment, and the noise went on again.

"There now, the young fellers are beginning to come!" cried Nancy, all in a flutter, and speaking below her breath. "I saw a hull wagon load get out as I stopped in the entry way. How they are all fixed up! Tim Johnson's got a red ribbon to his cue, and such bright buckles in his shoes. Oh! goodness!"

"Hush! hush! they're coming!" whispered half a dozen voices at once, and there was a general flutter of expectation, at which the birds overhead were entirely distanced. It was some minutes before the young men ventured to mingle freely with the girls; but their shyness soon wore off, and it was rather difficult to suppress them into decorous silence, when Mrs. Leonard and Dr. Blake came forward to preside at their portion of the festival. White Leonard, with his fine frank face beaming with tranquil happiness, was uttering his rather lengthy blessing in the orchard, the minister was equally sententious over the great pie in the best room within; and directly there was such a hum and clatter all around the minister's dwelling, such passing of dainties and interchange of smiles, that the birds gave up and stopped singing for the day, feeling themselves quite lost and overpowered in the general hilarity.

In the midst of this charming riot, Amy, who was thrown back into her anxiety the moment

she had nothing to work at, began to cast furtive glances down the footpath. It was scarcely time for Hagar to come, but the sickness of suspense grew strong upon her, and, at last, she stole from the table and made her way down the orchard.

When she reached the fence, Hagar was in sight, walking rapidly. The kind slave checked her pace at the sight of Amy, and came heavily toward her.

"Oh! Hagar!"

It was all her white lips could utter. Hagar saw the anguish of expectation in her face and looked away.

"Have you nothing to tell me, Hagar?"

Oh! the heart-broken tone. It cut Hagar to the soul.

"No, Miss. Yer see I hadn't much chance to ask 'bout anything. Miss Hannah and her beau started right off, and I kinder walked along."

"Hannah and her beau! Are they here?"

"Yes. They came on ahead."

"And you have nothing to tell me?"

"No, I—I—in course Miss Hannah will have the news, so it wasn't worth while for me to wait."

"And I must ask for it there—among all those people. Oh! what can I do? How can I speak?"

She was looking in terror toward the house, afraid to go there, but unable to wait. A moment of keen struggle and she started away, clenching her hands and pressing her lips harder at each step.

"Amy! Miss Amy! come back! I'm a sneaking coward to let you go and hear it amongst 'em all. Amy Leonard, come back, I say!"

But Amy was too far off. Hagar's voice mingled with the noises that filled the orchard, and the poor child entered the house, wild and panting.

The supper-room was crowded. Mrs. Leonard stood near the minister, who had twice warmed her heart by praises of the chicken pie. Hannah Arnold stood near, looking flushed and anxious, like one who had just tasted something of bitterness dashed into a cup of joy while at her lips. She had looked around for Amy, on her first entrance to the room, and, with a sense of relief at finding her absent, was now talking in a low voice to the minister's wife. Amy struggled up to where they were standing; but they had drawn close to the table, and she only found a place between them and the wall. Thus they remained unconscious of her presence.

"Is not this unexpected news about your

brother?" The minister's wife was half whispering. "We had no idea that he was paying serious attentions to the young lady. Indeed we thought——"

Hannah broke in upon the words before they were uttered. She could not endure to hear what was the general expectation. It was a wound to her delicate friendship for Amy to have her name mentioned in the conversation.

"Yes, it was sudden, but perhaps we ought not to be surprised at it. She is a very lovely person."

"When will the wedding come off?"

The minister's wife spoke in a low voice, and Hannah answered, still more subduedly,

"Next week. We are all going to New Haven, and, and you must not be surprised if I—that is, if it is a double wedding. *He* insists upon it."

"What! her brother? Oh! I understand."

That instant Hannah felt a hand grasp her arm—a hand so cold that it chilled her; and a whisper that made her breath come quick seemed to pass into her heart.

"Hannah, is it Benedict who is going to marry some one?"

For a moment Hannah's lips refused to move. Then she bent her head to the pale face looking over her shoulder, and answered,

"Yes, dear Amy."

A moment, and the cold hand clutched her arm like a vice; then a heavy weight fell against

her, and, turning quickly, she caught Amy in her arms.

"Help me to get her out," she said, in a hoarse whisper, addressing the minister's wife. "Oh! what can I do?"

The good woman passed her arm around the sinking girl, and the two, without noise or outcry, bore Amy into the passage; but the movement could not be altogether concealed. Some one who saw the white face drooping on Hannah's shoulder called out,

"Doctor! Ho! Dr. Blake."

The sound ran through those chill veins like fire. Amy lifted her head, gave one wild look around, and sprang away.

A dusky sunset filled the orchard; but the young people enjoying themselves under the trees, saw a pale creature flitting through them so swiftly that no one, at first, recognized her; then a careless voice observed,

"It is Amy Leonard. How strangely she acts to day!" and she was forgotten again.

As Hagar stood by the fence, this white face came toward her, veered on one side, and, with the noise of a slight scramble, crossed the fence.

"Amy! Amy Leonard, it is only me, yer friend, yer best friend till death. Come to Hagar! Come to Hagar!"

But the figure darted on, faster and faster, and the darkness fell around it.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

REDMAN'S RUN.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

[Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1860, by Frank Lee Benedict, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.]

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 198.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE weeks passed slowly on toward winter, and, for a time, I was quite alone at Redman's Run.

My uncle was in Washington, trying to procure an appointment which he had long wanted; and I was told by the old pastor that Maurice was in New York, giving himself more completely to dissipation than he had ever before done.

So Prudence and I were very quiet in the old house; I was engaged with my studies, and wrote diligently beside. I was not happy. It would have been difficult for any young man under similar circumstances to have found anything like rest; but I worked hard, and the hours that were not devoted to my books or papers were spent on horseback, galloping wildly over the hills to quiet the excitement which fevered my blood.

Letters reached me regularly from Alice—dear, sweet letters, that, by their presages for the future, almost consoled me for the wearing round of the present. All was going well with her; Mrs. Morgan's health was much better, and her husband treated her more kindly than he had done for years. Maurice visited her father occasionally, but she seldom saw him, nor had there been any further question concerning the marriage save her father's petulant expostulations, which she allowed to have no weight.

There is one peculiarity of a monotonous life: although the time seems endless when we recall the events, yet the weeks slip away in the most inexplicable manner. So that season glided from me, and I was astonished to find the winter half gone before I had ceased wondering if it would ever commence.

Toward the latter end of January my uncle returned, more dispirited and chagrined than I had ever seen him, for he had failed in his mission. He did not converse with me upon the subject, but I could see how much he suffered, and several journals opposed to him were unsparing in their ridicule, adding the severest censure upon his conduct, and hinting at dark

secrets in his past life, which, they asserted, if clearly known, would blast his reputation for ever.

I read all these things before his arrival, so that I was quite prepared to see a change in him; but when I went out into the hall to greet him, upon his return, I was really shocked to find him looking so worn and ill.

"Is Maurice here?" was almost the first question he asked.

"No, sir; he has not been here since you went away."

"I know; but I saw him in town the day before yesterday, and he promised to reach here before I did."

"He has not come, sir."

My uncle turned impatiently away. I saw how much he was hurt by my cousin's neglect.

"You are looking very unwell," I said.

"Never mind my looks," he replied, abruptly, almost with harshness, then he added, more gently, "I want a little rest. Nothing ails me but fatigue."

Prudence came out to welcome him. She was much attached to my uncle, having lived in the family since he was a child, and I really believe would have sacrificed her life for him without the slightest hesitation.

She was a singular old woman, often crabbed and irritable, but for those whom she loved she had a depth of affection I have rarely seen equaled. There was no sacrifice too hard for her to make, no exaction to which she would not submit. She had never married; her home had been in that old house since my grandmother brought her there a young girl, and all her interests and affections had centered about the family.

"You want to be taken care of, master Charles," she said, calling him, as she often did even yet, by the familiar name of his youth; "you look as peaked as possible."

"A little of your attention will do that," he replied, kindly. Indeed, to Prudence, my uncle was rarely impatient or unjust. "How have things gone on since I went away?"

"Wal, partly well; but Paul's a-moping himself to death."

"He must have patience a little longer," said my uncle, always gentler to me in the old lady's presence than at any other time; "it will be only two months before he can enter Mr. Lennox's office."

"So they all go away from the old woman," said Prudence, sadly. "Wal, wal, its hard to part with them I love; but there'll never be a parting for me like that with Miss Emily. It nearly broke my heart. I seemed to have a feeling I should never see her again, and I didn't! Nothing left of her but that boy there, and he grows more like her every day of his life."

My uncle gave me a strange look, such as I had often seen upon his face when my parents' names were mentioned: its language I could never understand; whether it expressed pain or hatred I did not know, and it was as unintelligible then.

"I'll go and see about dinner any how," Prudence said, moving toward the dining-room. "Tisn't no use to starva you out when you do come, which is seldom enough, goodness knows."

My uncle followed her hastily, and as they reached the door I heard him say,

"Has she been here again?"

"Who?"

"That woman."

"The crazy cretur? No; you don't say this out agin. Oh! massy sakes! Was I right, Master Charles? Was it Lucy?"

"No, no; I have told you she is dead! I know nothing about this woman, but if she comes here people may talk——"

"And oh! Master Charles, the old stories——"

"Hush, I say! Paul can hear you."

They entered the dining-room and closed the door.

There was some mystery to which I had never been able to obtain a clue. Upon many subjects, much as she loved me, Prudence was silent; my uncle's past was one, and no persuasions, no artifice, ever wheedled from her lips anything beyond the most commonplace details connected with his youth.

Maurice did not arrive until the next day. He came, so haggard and worn by bad passions and an evil life, that he was scarcely recognizable.

"I have come, you see," he said, staggering into the library where my uncle and I were writing. "I hope you will feel easier in your mind."

He was not actually intoxicated at the time, but he had evidently been drinking all the night before, and the excess had left him in a state of excitement bordering on insanity.

"You look as if you ought to be in bed," returned my uncle, evidently shocked by his condition. "Go and sleep awhile."

"Nonsense! something to drink will set me up much better," he said, flinging himself into a chair, without appearing even to notice that I was in the room.

"Why did you not come yesterday, as you promised?"

"Because it didn't happen to be convenient," replied Maurice, with more than his customary insolence. "But I am here now, and what is more, I want some money."

"Which I really cannot give you, Maurice. You have spent an incredible sum this winter."

"None went for suppers and fees in Washington, I suppose," he returned, with a sneer.

"I certainly used my best efforts to procure the appointment—your extravagance has so crippled me that I stood in need of the income it would have brought in."

"My extravagance! Don't you think we have had about enough of that humbug? It is very ridiculous between you and me."

"You forget that Paul is here!"

"Paul! The young rascal knows what I promised him, and it will come, never fear; it will come."

"Your threats are as despicable as your conduct," I replied.

"Stop!" said my uncle, sternly. "Not another word from either! I am master in this house, and, Maurice, I will teach you that I am."

"I have not disputed it. I asked you to give me some money."

"I cannot, and I will not!"

Maurice sprang to his feet, maddened by the refusal.

"I'll have two thousand dollars before to-morrow night," he exclaimed, "if I sell my soul and disgrace myself eternally to get it!"

With his usual weakness my uncle tried to soothe and argue with him, but it was no more possible than it would be with a lunatic.

"I tell you I must and will have it, so there is an end of the matter!"

My uncle turned to me and asked if I had taken my ride, giving me several little commissions in the village, which clearly showed he wished to be rid of me; so I went away.

I heard Maurice's voice, as I stood in the hall,

loud in anger, and, wondering at my uncle's weakness, I went my way.

When I returned to the house, Maurice had gone—back to New York, Prudence believed.

"Such a dreadful quarrel as they had! I really was afraid Maurice would kill your uncle. I tell you, Paul, that man's temper'll get him into an awful scrape some day."

My uncle made no remark upon what had passed, but he looked pale and harassed. His manner to me was kind, but an added restraint seemed growing between us daily, the reason for which, on his part, I could not comprehend.

CHAPTER IX.

SPRING was near; the last snows had melted from the hills; the maple buds began to swell and show their first tinge of red, and in the flower garden a bed of crocuses shot up which I watched blossoming with great solicitude.

My uncle joined me one morning as I was walking up and down the verandah, waiting impatiently for the hour which would bring me a letter from Alice.

"Paul," he said, "will you go to the city for me?"

He had given my most ardent wishes words. I had so longed for an opportunity to visit Alice, but there had been no reasonable excuse for going to town, and I feared to bring new trouble upon her or Mrs. Morgan, if I went without some ostensible business.

"Certainly, sir. When shall I go?"

"James can drive you over to the landing—you will just be in time for the boat, if you go at once."

The business was not difficult—only to get some papers of Mr. Lennox; but they were of too much importance to trust to the mail, and he was not well enough to go himself.

I started at once, and, on reaching town, performed my mission with all possible dispatch—I was free then to seek Alice.

I could not believe that I was so soon to see her—even when I reached the house and was told that she was in, it seemed quite impossible to realize that she was so near.

I walked round the darkened drawing-room, too impatient to be quiet, and reminded by a thousand trifling things of her: the flowers on the table, the music scattered over the piano, a snowy glove beside it!

Then the door opened, and, with a cry of delight, I felt Alice pressed close to my heart.

"I could not believe my own senses," she said,

when we had both grown more calm; "you wrote me nothing about this visit."

"Which can only be for an hour; I did not myself know of it until this morning."

"Then you have not come to town to stay?"

"Not yet; still another month before that."

"Oh! I am so disappointed. But never mind, I will not be gloomy during the few moments you are here."

She sat down by me, and we were soon lost in a thousand pleasant projects, talking of the lonely weeks we had passed, of the nameless trifles which would seem insignificant to others, but which make the happiness of those who love.

"You must see mamma," she said, at last; "excuse me for a moment."

It was not long before she returned with Mrs. Morgan leaning on her arm. The little lady really looked younger and less worn down. I could see how faithfully Alice had protected her—she even smiled and spoke without trembling.

"I am very glad to see you," she said; "we have missed you so much. Dear me! Alice, he looks more like Emily every day."

There was an expression of tenderness on her pale face which touched me greatly. But after a little more conversation, she glided away like a ghost—that felt she could have no part in our happiness, and would not trouble it by the chill of her presence.

"She is better; do you not think she is better?" Alice asked, anxiously, after her mother had disappeared.

"I do, indeed; but you look pale—have you been well?"

"Only lonely, Paul."

"Then you have found time to miss me?"

"You mean I have had time for nothing else! I wrote you how little we went out; I have had nothing to do but wonder if the winter would ever come to an end."

"Have you seen Maurice lately?"

"He was here two or three weeks ago; but don't speak of him, Paul, it brings me bad fortune even to hear his name."

"Are you grown superstitious?"

"Almost, where that man is concerned! Only the other day my father asked me if I had come to my senses, and was ready to reconsider my resolution?"

"What did you say?"

"That I would rather die than marry Maurice Redman!" she exclaimed, with energy; "and I would, Paul—death would be far preferable to calling that man husband."

"Do not think of him, Alice; he is powerless as long as you continue firm."

"Which I can easily do while I have you to aid me."

Then we ceased talking or thinking of Maurice, remembered nothing but our own selfish plans, and the happiness of being, for a little time, united.

We were sitting in a small room off the parlors, and the draperies which divided it from them were partially flung down, so that any one might have entered the outer room unperceived. I was telling Alice of the project I had formed for the next year, one which I hoped would bring us nearer the happiness my heart desired, and she was sitting encircled by my arms, her head drooping upon my shoulder.

Suddenly she started from my side. I heard the sobbing breath which repressed a cry—looked up and saw Maurice standing at the entrance.

He was white with rage, his hands twisting the damask draperies, and upon his lips the terrible smile, which they often wore during one of his fiendish passions.

"I see now," he sneered, "who is my rival; I congratulate Miss Morgan upon her taste."

"The means you took to make the discovery are quite worthy of you," I replied, rising from my seat.

He made me no answer. His eyes burning with hate were fixed upon Alice's face.

"Do you love that boy?" he asked.

"One word of insolence to her," I exclaimed, "and I will throw you into the street," for my own temper was greatly excited by his manner.

"Don't, Paul!" whispered Alice, recovering from the alarm which his abrupt appearance had caused, and summoning her strong courage. "What did you ask, Mr. Redman?"

"Do you love him?—that boy, that baby?"

She put her hand in mine with a smile—flung back her head proudly and exclaimed,

"Yes; I do love him, with all my heart and soul."

His hand dropped to his side—his features were actually convulsed with evil passions.

"You are answered," I said; "now leave this room."

"Are you master here?"

"No; but at least I have the right to protect Miss Morgan from insult."

"Fool! I have but to call her father, and he would kick you into the street."

I sprang toward him. At that moment I was mad as he; but Alice stepped between us, and her voice brought my senses back.

"Paul, for my sake. Paul!"

I was calmed immediately; but the tender entreaty with which she pronounced my name only deepened Maurice's anger.

"You have the advantage," he exclaimed, "but you have not conquered yet! I swear that you shall both repent this! As for you, Paul Cheney——"

"No threats here, I will not endure them," I interrupted.

"Miss Morgan," he continued, "I bid you farewell; you have rejected my love, beware now of my hatred! I must have your father's opinion of this affair—I shall relate to him the touching scene I interrupted."

"Will you go away?" I cried; but again Alice stayed me.

"Paul Cheney," he replied, "before to-morrow night you shall be houseless, homeless, a more wretched beggar than you have yet been."

He left the room without another word, and when we heard the outer door close behind him, Alice's strength gave way—she sank upon the sofa, pale and trembling.

"Oh! Paul, we are lost!"

"What can he do, Alice?"

"My father—your uncle—he will go to both!"

"Let him! They may separate us for a time, years perhaps; but if you are only faithful to the love you have promised, we shall conquer all obstacles in the end."

"I will be, Paul—I swear it!"

"They will try you hardy, my poor Alice, but do not let them crush your spirit. Above all, protect your mother—even at the risk of being forced to choose a guardian—do not allow her to be any longer persecuted."

"I will not, indeed I will not! But you, Paul—what will happen to you?"

"Of whom should I stand in fear?" I said, proudly.

"Your uncle will be as much enraged as Maurice."

"Then I shall leave his house; I am grateful to him for such kindness as he has shown me, but, to gratify his favorite, I shall not give up my only hope of happiness."

"How will it all end?" sighed Alice. "Oh! how?"

"Well; if you are but courageous."

"Do not fear for me, Paul! When you are gone I shall be strong—I will not let them wrest this love from me."

"Then nothing can work harm between us! Remember, Alice, they will try every means—we shall each hear stories of the other's falsehood."

"Nothing will convince me, Paul. And you?"
"I could as soon doubt myself!"

So, in our fancied strength, we were ready to confront any danger with which our enemy might threaten us, little dreaming of the black cloud that loomed nearer, bringing in its train desolation, disgrace, every ill that crushes out hope and life from the human heart.

I tore myself away at last. Sad as that parting was, one lay beyond so much more terrible, that it would never have entered the wildest imagination that such sorrow could fall upon us.

It was late in the evening before I reached Redman's Run. My uncle took the papers, asked me no questions, and very soon went away to his own room, leaving me to wear the night out as best I could, combating a feeling of dread, which, at times, stole over me, and nursing my dreams of hope to still fuller blossoming.

CHAPTER X.

THE afternoon of the next day I was busy writing in my uncle's study, nothing having as yet transpired to disturb the tranquillity of the house. I had expected that Maurice would have arrived several hours before, and began to wonder in what way he would endeavor to gratify his malice and rage.

I had not much longer to wait. A carriage drove up to the house, and, looking into the hall, I saw Maurice and Mr. Morgan ascending the steps, while my uncle stood upon the verandah to welcome them.

I went quietly back to my work, smiling a little to myself at the approaching storm, but very indifferent as to its results. I had decided upon the course I should pursue, and it was not in human power wholly to thwart me.

It was a long time before my solitude was disturbed. I heard the three enter the drawing-room, and there they remained for more than an hour, doubtless in earnest consultation as to the most effectual means of separating Maurice and myself, and bringing about the marriage which had been so long in contemplation.

At length, Maurice and my uncle passed into the library, but the door opening to the study was closed, so that only a confused murmur of voices reached me. Indeed, the whole affair interested me very little. I knew that whatever arose I could trust to Alice's promise, and, as far as I was concerned, it only lay in my uncle's power to drive me from his house, beyond that neither he nor any one could exercise any control over me. I would have followed his advice in any other affair, but where my

happiness was so vitally concerned, I could only listen to the dictates of my heart.

I went calmly on with my occupation—that of copying and filing a package of papers—full of a strange exultation as I reflected how little, after all, our arch enemy could do to affect the destiny of either Alice or myself.

I became more engrossed in my employment, and ceased almost to hear their voices. At length, I came to a stand still—a paper of considerable importance was wanting, and I began searching about the cabinet for it.

I opened a narrow drawer, as I had often done before, thinking that my uncle might have accidentally placed it there. The drawer was full of rubbish, and I gave it an impatient pull, but it would not come entirely, so I struck violently against the side.

I must have touched some secret spring, for the drawer fell and would have been broken on the floor, but I caught it in my hand. The shock had forced open a little door in the cabinet, artfully concealed by the drawer, and of the existence of which no one would have dreamed.

I had no vulgar curiosity, nor do I believe there is a trace of meanness in my character; but, as I was trying to close the secret door, I saw a partially unfolded paper in the writing of my dead father.

Without pausing to reflect, I snatched it and read the first few lines. It was an old letter addressed to my uncle—it spoke of a large sum of money—something about retaining a portion for the use of his child Paul.

I sat stupidly staring at the paper, so overwhelmed by the half-understood treachery which it disclosed, that I could neither think nor stir.

The door opened. Before I could move, my uncle rushed across the room, snatched the paper from my hands, pushing me so violently that I staggered against the cabinet for support.

"Infamous beggar!" were the words that broke from his pale lips. "Thief, miserable thief! Maurice, look here!"

"He is searching your cabinet," returned my cousin. "No more than I should expect, sir—I always admired the weakness which made you place such implicit confidence in him. He is worthy of his parents—fit son of a mother like his!"

The stupefaction which had locked my faculties changed to a whirl of blind rage, that made me, for a moment, little better than a maniac. My blood was kindred to theirs, hot as their own, and it was fully roused.

I darted toward Maurice—seized him by the

throat—I had opened a window a little time before to cool the room—and before he could resist, or my uncle could interfere, I flung him out of it into the garden.

I heard my uncle cry out in wrath and horror, I have a faint recollection of seeing several of the servants standing in the door-way, but I was too insane to heed them.

"You have killed him!" exclaimed my uncle.

"No," I shouted; "but I will—God forgive me, I will! It is the last insult his lips shall ever speak."

I sprang out of the window—it was near the ground, and the fall could only have shocked Maurice, for he rose to his feet when he saw me beside him.

With a fiendish cry he sprang at my throat, and I rushed as frantically toward him.

I do not like to think of that scene—I never dare reflect what its consequences might have been—but fortunately they separated us. My uncle and a servant dragged me up to my room, flung me upon the floor, and locked me in like a prisoner.

An hour must have passed before I recovered from that terrible paroxysm. When I came to myself it was twilight, and I was still lying upon the floor. I rose feebly, went to the window and opened it, leaning out in the gloom. The chill air was very pleasant to me, and I remained there until strength and calmness gradually returned.

I was shocked at all which had passed, but I never blamed myself. I had suffered every species of insult from that bad man, I had been wronged, trampled upon; but when he added that wrong to my mother's memory, it was not in human nature to restrain myself longer.

At last I began to think of the paper which my uncle had snatched from my grasp. I had not felt enough to decide upon its contents, but I read that a great injury had been done me, and, from that moment, I believed my uncle guilty of some wrong toward the orphan whom he had sworn to protect.

I heard the key turn in the lock, and my uncle entered, bearing a light. I sat perfectly still while he closed the door behind him, placed the lamp upon the table and seated himself near me.

"Are you sane enough now to talk?" he asked, coldly.

"I am, sir," I replied, with equal calmness.

"Did you intend to murder your cousin?"

"I meant to avenge my mother—he insulted her memory—I would have choked his heart out—I will yet, if he does not retract."

"The same hot blood," he said, shaking his head; "will it never cool in our veins?"

"Mine is not excited without just cause—you know that well, sir!"

"It is past, Paul; your cousin wishes me to apologize, he was mad, too, and he had reason."

"What, I ask, what?"

"We will come to that presently. First, answer me a few questions."

"Not when they are put in that tone! I will answer no man whose very tone is a threat!"

"Don't do the heroic, Paul, I am too old for that! You have lived always in my house, I have a right, at least, to your respect and candor."

"And you have had both!"

"Then let me continue to do so. What were you searching for in my cabinet?"

I told him the whole story, simply and truthfully—my eyes never fell beneath his keen gaze.

"Had you read that paper?"

"Only a few lines, although I had caught some words farther down the page."

He drew a deep breath; there was that in his face which showed he no longer feared me, and that he had decided upon his course.

"What was that paper?" I asked, haughtily, as he had questioned me. "It was my father's writing, and I have a right to know."

"This is gratitude," he said, not bitterly, but with an icy disdain in his voice, that stung me more deeply than any reproaches could have done.

I did not speak. After a little, still surveying me with that disdainful look, he added,

"What do you believe it to have been?"

"Something in relation to a sum of money which my father placed in your hands for my benefit."

"And what do you think I have done with it?"

"That you know best, sir!"

He rose from his seat, and walked slowly up and down the room for many moments.

"Paul," he said, at last, "you will live to repent those words! You have insulted the only friend you ever had—you have proved yourself a monster of ingratitude—if you have any claims to humanity, you must repent that."

A guilty pang shot across my heart. If I had indeed wronged him, I was the vilest wretch on earth.

"Tell me what it was then," I faltered.

"You shall know, though otherwise you would never have even suspected the secret. You have brought this suffering upon yourself—you shall

hear your father's shame. He forged my name to a check—more than once—I found it out. He was my sister's husband, I could not disgrace him. He refunded a portion of the money—that was the letter you saw—he told me he was near his end, and prayed me to have mercy upon his child."

I fell back in my chair—there was a horrible oppression upon my heart—I could neither speak nor breathe, and in the dim light my uncle watched me like some marble form, pitiless, immovable, crushing me with the history of my father's shame.

"Are you satisfied now?" he asked, coldly.

I tried to rise, fell back again, cold and trembling, as if struck with death, and only able to gasp,

"It is not true, only tell me it is not true?"

"It is true, Paul," he said; "if you desire proofs, you shall have them to-morrow."

"No, no—have mercy!"

My suffering only made him more urgent.

"Perhaps it would be best," he continued, with the same terrible calmness; "you have doubted my word once—possibly you will again."

His manner roused my pride, even in the depth of degradation into which I had fallen.

"I will look at them, if you wish!"

He frowned slightly, but replied coldly as before,

"Certainly, let no doubt of your father's shame be left! You are courageous, you desire to know the worst; there are sons who would prefer to leave themselves a shadow of respect for a parent's memory."

"Let me see it!" I repeated.

"To-morrow, then. I will destroy them afterward, I do not wish this painful secret to be known to any other human being."

"You have a right to crush me," I moaned, "no one could blame you, no one."

"I have no desire to do it," he replied, more kindly; "my sister's son can never wholly alienate himself from my affections."

"I cannot thank you now," I said, "hereafter, perhaps——"

My uncle took my hand—I felt it tremble—it seemed to me that he shuddered to find himself in contact with one who had so injured him.

"Paul," he said, "let this subject rest forever! I will never think of it again, nor must you. We will not talk any more of it."

I did not speak, although a flood of questions struggled at my heart for utterance.

"Now, Paul, one thing more. Are you engaged to Alice Morgan?"

"I am," I replied, boldly, that name made me strong at once.

"And does she love you?"

"She has told me so."

"Don't you know that her father will never consent?"

"She will be her own mistress before many years."

"He desires her to marry your cousin."

"Maurice shall never have her—never!"

"We will not talk of it any more—I will see you to-morrow. Will you oblige me?"

"Anything that you ask, sir!"

"Do not leave your room to-night—I do not wish you and Maurice to meet again until you are both somewhat calmer."

I promised to do as he desired, and he left the chamber; but again the key was turned, I was treated as a culprit still.

There I sat, stunned by this terrible revelation, which he had so coldly flung in upon my suffering. How could I dare look forward to a future, a felon's son? Then a revulsion of feeling swept over me—it could not be true—it was some horrible plot against my happiness, and my whole life should be devoted to its unraveling.

Steps sounded outside the door, and I heard Prudence's voice choked by tears.

"Paul, Paul!"

"I am locked in," I said.

"Yes, I know; but I have brought your dinner."

She fumbled awhile at the key, but at length she opened the door, carrying a tray of food, which she placed hastily upon the table.

"Oh! my Paul, my Paul!" she sobbed, taking me in her arms, "I can't blame you; I know Maurice must have done something terrible, but you might have killed him."

"Still he is quite safe, I believe."

"Oh! he's well enough, but a body never knows what he may do—that man's a born devil, I know he is."

"What are they all doing?"

"They have just done dinner. I do believe something has happened; your uncle just got a letter, and he turned white as a sheet when he read it, then he gave it to Maurice with an awful look. They went away together, but there's some trouble, I'm certain—I hope Master Charles'll find that feller out. But do eat, Paul, you look so pale."

"I am not hungry, Prudence."

"But you must eat, human natur' needs feeding. Now do, Paul, just for old aunty's sake." She caressed me, and wept over me, as she

had so often done when I was a child; and, to gratify her, I ate a few mouthfuls, although each one seemed choking me.

At last she was forced to go away, bidding me farewell with a burst of tears, as if she thought we were never to meet again.

"I must lock you in, Paul," she said, "I promised your uncle I would. Try and sleep, I'm sure it will all be right in the morning; I only hope he's found Maurice out."

She went away after exerting all her efforts to soothe me, and I was alone again.

Then I sat by the window, looking out into the night, more hopeless and wretched than I had thought any misfortune could ever make me.

I heard the old clock in the hall toll out the hours, mournful and strong in the stillness as a funeral bell. Every sound in the house died away; a low wind sighed, for a time, among the trees, but even that ceased at length; the sluggish beating of my heart was the only sound I heard.

At last the clock struck twelve; the moon was up, but hazy clouds veiled her light, leaving all objects indistinct and dim.

Looking out, I saw my uncle leave the house and walk slowly down the path toward the Run.

I moved away from the window, the sight of him added a new pang to my suffering. Perhaps he was mourning over my ingratitude—it might have been that I had deceived myself—he had loved me in spite of the wrong which my father had done him, and now the son, by his suspicions, had renewed the bitter memories which he had allowed to slumber in his heart.

Half an hour might have passed. The agony in my heart was unendurable—I felt that I must go mad if I did not, on the instant, seek my uncle and ask his pardon for my crime.

I stepped out of the window upon the roof of a porch, and slid down one of the vine-wreathed pillars, as I had so often done for amusement in my childhood.

I ran down the path which my uncle had taken, passed through the grove, and stood upon the bank just above the fall, which thundered down, flashing out its spray like a sheet of jewels in the moonlight.

I looked eagerly round for my uncle; suddenly a cry rose above the din of the waterfall. I looked down, two men were struggling upon the grass, the one uppermost dealt heavy blows, flung his victim upon the ground, and ran off like the wind.

I tottered down the ascent. How I reached the spot I cannot tell—but there I was, and on

the grass at my feet lay my uncle, dead—murdered!

I shook off the horror which unnerved me—bent over him—laid my hand upon his heart, no pulse beat, not a muscle quivered; still from his side oozed the sluggish crimson stream which had borne his life away.

"He is dead!" said a hollow voice; "quite dead!"

I looked up. Before me stood the mad woman so long unseen, her thin garments fluttering in the night wind, and her long auburn hair streaming about her form.

"He is dead," I repeated, mechanically, "dead, and he had not forgiven me!"

"Hush!" she exclaimed. "Voices, they come, they will take me—fly, fly!"

She disappeared from sight like a phantom; and at that moment I heard quick footsteps and loud voices, my cousin's sounding above all.

"This way," he cried, "I heard the shrieks distinctly, I know something terrible has happened."

Before I could move, the group sprang down the bank, Maurice and Mr. Morgan at their head.

"Good God!" the latter exclaimed. "He has murdered him."

I heard my cousin's cry of grief—heard the moans and execrations of the rest: but I could not speak.

They seized me—tied my hands, and led me toward the house, two men following with the body, and my cousin sobbing aloud.

Half way up the path, we were met by Prudence rushing frantically along; a single word made her comprehend the whole scene.

"It's a lie!" she shrieked. "Let him go, I say—let him go!"

She clutched Mr. Morgan in her grasp, but they forced her off.

"I tell you," said one of the men, "here's Paul's knife, I've seen him use it a hundred times."

"He never did it," shrieked Prudence—"he never did it! Let him go, I say!"

"Take hold of her, some one," said Mr. Morgan; "she is perfectly crazy."

"No, I am not," she replied; "I am sane enough yet; I will show you that I am! This is some plot, some scheme of the wicked folks that hate him! Speak up, Paul, speak up, my own lamb, tell 'em you never did it."

I did not speak, I had not the power.

They led me forward—I neither resisted nor looked up! I heard Prudence's cries but I could not speak or understand.

Once in the house, they flung me into a dark closet, hand-cuffed and bound me. Then there came a blank which must have lasted for many terrible hours, neither madness nor insensibility, a sort of waking trance without either thought or consciousness.

It was morning when I came to myself. A faint gleam of light stole through a crack of the door. I could hear the steps of the man who guarded me, walking up and down through the hall. Several times there was the sound of other footsteps—persons speaking to him, questions and replies were exchanged, but all in the unnatural whisper which people employ in a sick-room. Finally, I heard a voice that I knew was Prudence's call out in bitter anguish,

"Paul, Paul!"

Then the man appeared to be expostulating with her, but she only beat more frantically on the door, crying,

"I will speak to him! I don't care what anybody says! I will speak to him! Paul, Paul, it is old Prudence—answer your aunty, do answer."

I struggled up from the floor and tried to collect my faculties sufficiently to respond, but I had no strength left, and could only fall back again with a dreary moan.

"He's dead!" shrieked Prudence. "I believe they've killed him! Oh! my Paul, my Paul!"

Then there were more footsteps and other voices. I heard some one say,

"The officers have come."

Then Prudence groaned again, and called more despairingly than before,

"Oh! Paul, Paul!"

But I could not answer; every nerve appeared paralyzed. I seemed falling again into that strange trance—I struggled against it, but in vain. The voices from without appeared more distant, they sounded to me like the roaring of the fall! Then I seemed to see my uncle's ghastly face, he was trying to speak to me, then I knew nothing more for a time.

At last the door opened—I saw a throng in

the hall, they called me by name. Some one raised me up, helped me out into the passage, and I walked mechanically along like a statue endowed with the power of motion, but perfectly incapable of thought or speech.

For a space I could not realize what they meant to do with me, or why they were here at all. I looked wonderingly around, searching for something which would bring my memory back, but there was only a leaden weight there which revealed nothing.

Suddenly there was a loud, sobbing voice at the farther end of the hall.

"Let me pass! Nobody shall keep me from him! Let me pass; stand back, every one of you."

Then I saw Prudence rush frantically toward me, pushing the crowd to the right and left. She threw her arms about me moaning,

"Oh! Paul, Paul!"

The agony of her voice restored my recollection! I understood everything in an instant—why I was there—the fearful deed of which I was accused; but in that first moment of horror I could only cling wildly to Prudence, as if feeling that in her eager embrace there was protection and rest.

She wept over me, calling me by every tender epithet which her strong love could suggest, breaking off abruptly to appeal to those around for sympathy, and upbraiding them for their cruelty and wickedness in placing me, even for a moment, in that frightful position.

"Oh! Paul, Paul!" was the only moan she could make at length.

I think even the excited throng around were moved by her anguish, and the pallid horror which my face must have revealed.

But the softening influence was only momentary. Stern voices broke the stillness, rude hands pushed poor, old Prudence aside, and they led me away, separated even from the one friend who would have clung to me in that fearful desolation.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)